



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

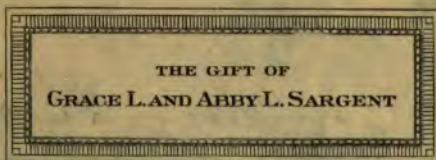
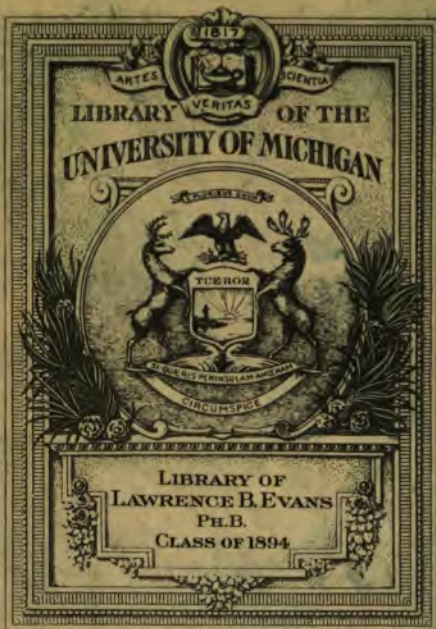
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

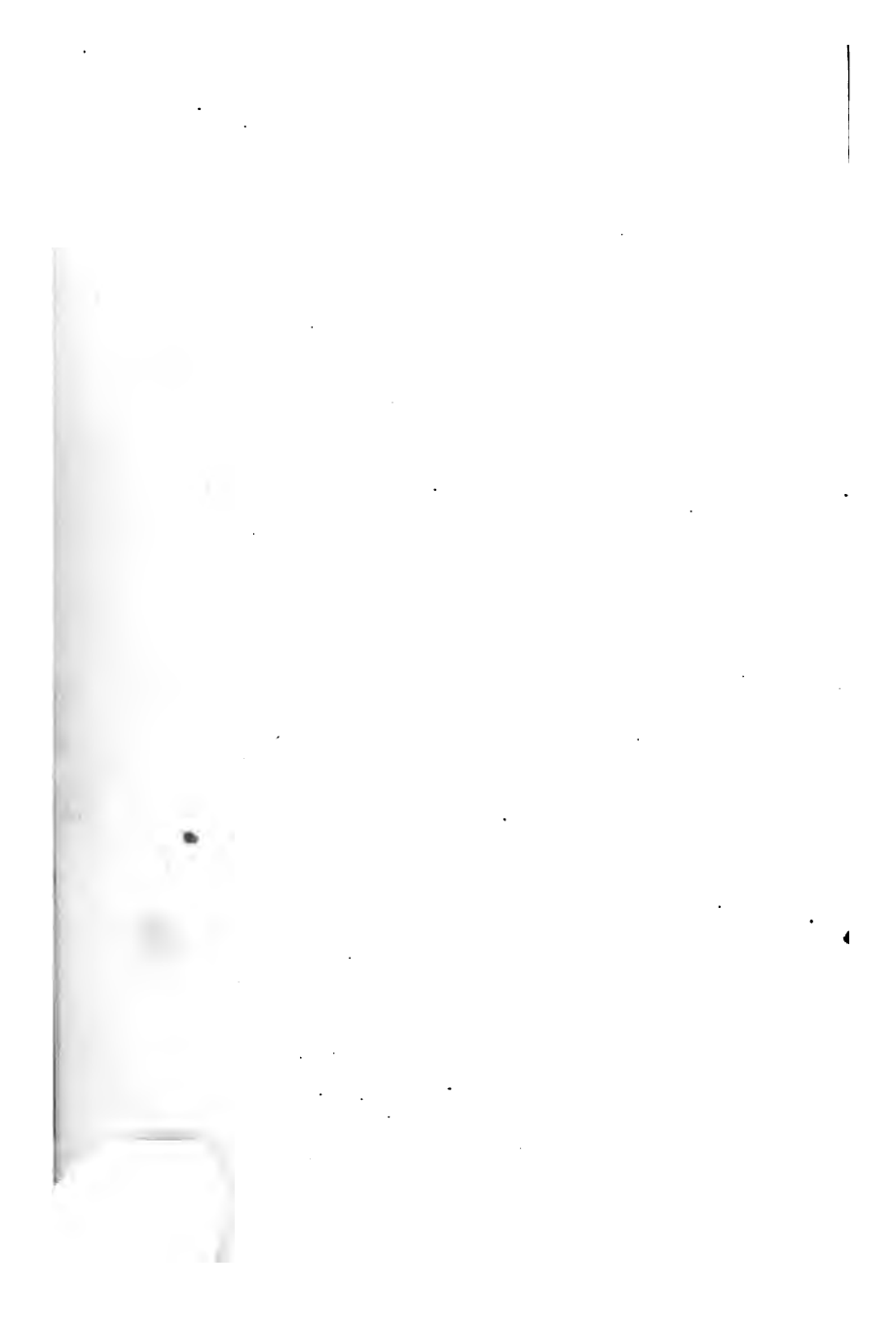
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>







838
S348h
t



THE HABERMEISTER

A TALE OF

THE BAVARIAN MOUNTAINS

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

OF

HERMANN SCHMID



NEW YORK

LEYPOLDT & HOLT

1869

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by

LEYPOLDT & HOLT,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District
of New York.



STEREOTYPED BY
DENNIS BRO'S & CO.,
AUBURN, N. Y.

PRINTED BY
NEW YORK PRINTING CO.,
81, 83 & 85 CENTRE ST., N. Y.

Library of L. B. Evans
3-3-31

INTRODUCTION.

A SECRET society, like that of the Haberers, which has existed in Bavaria for over an hundred years, mocking at every law in the State, and defying its power, suddenly starting up where least expected, familiar with the deepest domestic secrets, exercising its office of avenger and suddenly disappearing, has necessarily attracted the attention of thoughtful observers in all times.

Some think that the origin of the Haber court is to be sought in the "*Vehme*" of the Middle Ages. But there is no proof of this except that the people have adopted the same means to obtain the same ends.

This tribunal had its origin in the darkest period of Bavarian history, in the days of

Charles Theodore, who ascended the throne in the year 1777, and whose reign was one of unmitigated tyranny. In those times, life, property, and liberty, depended on the whims of the King's mistresses. As did the sovereign on his throne, so did the noble in his castle, and the abbot in his monastery. The abominations of despotism knew no bounds, and at last the people aroused themselves and tried to throw off the yoke. A secret tribunal for the people, called the Haberfeld, and of which the presiding judge was called the Habermeister, was established, and its edicts were directed against those crimes for which there was found no punishment in the law, and against those criminals who were above the law. Thus was established the Haberfeld Court, whose task was *to avenge violated morality and to uprear the downtrodden right.*

The Court soon attained high authority among the people, and exercised its office of avenger with patriarchal power. At the dead of night the criminal was aroused from his slumber, and half asleep, half dressed, was

carried before the tribunal. Magistrates and officers of the law were of no avail there. Kneeling, he heard read to him the record of his crimes, and in the presence of the whole community he was admonished to amend his ways. A Spartan-like sternness prevailed among the members of this society. Their secrets were kept with inviolable faith; and if any injury was done to property, ample recompense was quickly and secretly made to the aggrieved one.

But since these times, justice can be had. Bavaria has been changed from a state of despotism into one of law, and the reason as well as the justification of the Haber Court has ceased. Soon the knowledge of the mysterious tribunal will be to the Bavarian peasant only a tradition of the past—"the good old times." *

Herman Schmid, the author of the following

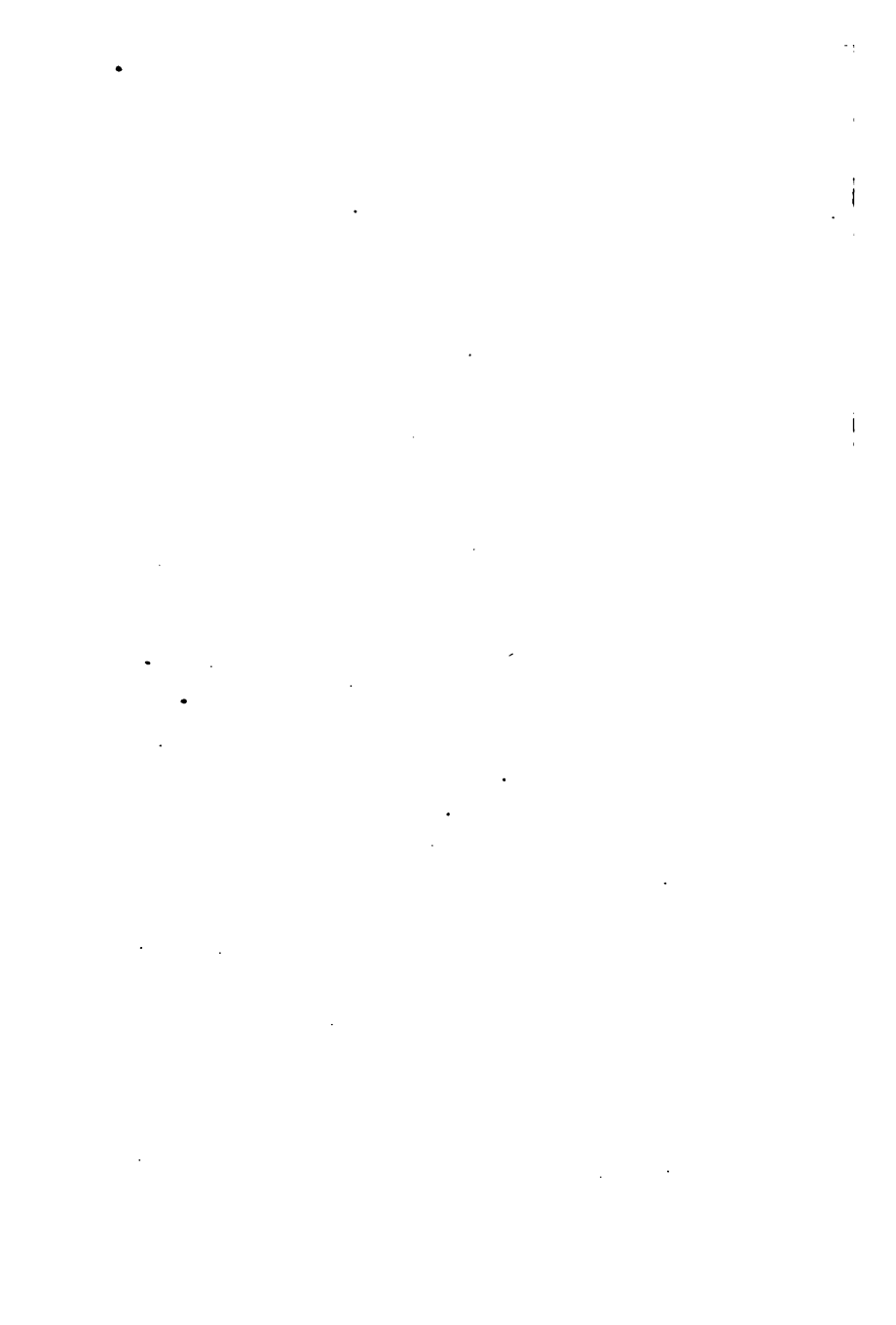
* The word *haber* means oats, and *haberfeld* oat-field, probably from the sessions of the court being generally held in the open fields, and at the end of the oat-harvest. *Habermester* means the presiding judge or chief officer of the tribunal. These words will necessarily be much used in the following pages.

novel, was born in Upper Austria, in the year 1815. After practicing law for some time, he was appointed Secretary of the Criminal Court of Munich. From this office he was removed after the revolution of 1848, on account of his liberal views. Outside of his profession he has become eminent as a poet, dramatist, and novelist. His dramas, Camoens, Thasillo, etc., have been represented on the stage at Munich, Berlin, and Vienna. His reputation, however, rests chiefly upon his novels, such as "The Habermester," "Chancellor of Tyrol," "Almenrausch."

All his novels have been drawn from the ancient or modern history of Bavaria, and have been characterized as real cabinet pieces by the leading critics of Germany, on account of the delicacy of their delineation. They are remarkable for the beauty and fidelity of their descriptions of nature, and the variety and naturalness of their characters. Schmid, in criticizing his own works, has said, that "in them the actual has answered the same purpose as history in historical novels, and has

given the design and outline to the conception ;
so that scarcely anything remained but to draw
the picture clearly, give it color, and thus represent a bit of true life."

TRANSLATOR.



THE HABERMEISTER.

CHAPTER I.

"CONFOUND it! What sort of an inn is this, where you have to wait all day for a drink! Hang the girl! Why don't she fetch the beer?"

Thus exclaimed a thick-set man in half peasant garb, at the same time impatiently rattling the pewter cover of his stone tankard. He had just come to the tavern at the cross-roads, and had seated himself on one side of the steps leading up to the door. The inn, with its clean, white-washed walls, its many bright windows and green shutters, and its high gaudily-painted gable, stood forth quite invitingly in the midst of a great open space, just where two well-traveled highways crossed each other at right angles.

The forest had been cleared away on all

sides far back to where, on its borders, the strips of green meadow-land alternated with the broad fallow acres, and bare wheat-fields, on which the stubble, with its long floating white cobwebs, announced, as it were with waving banners, that the harvest had already entered on its own.

It was high noon ; the sun's rays fell hot and clear on wood and wold ; and when, now and then, a gentle breath of air was wafted by, it brought with it from the fir trees that resinous odor which was drawn out by the heat from their dusky, green branches. Nowhere could shade be seen, either on the rows of small benches, or on the still smaller tables before the inn door ; there only appeared the tops of some fruit-trees, over the hedge, in the grassy orchard. The peasant neglected everything to provide himself with the comfort of a shady seat ; and if he went to the beer-house, he preferred to be squeezed into a close, crowded room, almost as if he wished to get rid of the outer air to which he was daily exposed.

The steps at the entrance were under the

projecting eaves of the house, which cast a grateful shade, and formed a pleasant resting-place; and, on this account, the steps were already fully occupied by guests.

Nevertheless, the stout man who had just arrived, in his shirt-sleeves, with his coat thrown over his shoulder, a big stick in his hand, and a rough dog behind him, steered his course straight and unconcernedly toward a cool corner, as if he thoroughly understood that there, and nowhere else, a place must be waiting for him.

And he was not deceived in this expectation, for the peasants seated around had, on his appearance, hastened to draw near each other, that he might get to his place in the far corner, which was the coolest of all. And this respect was evidently shown him, not merely because he was an assuming, pushing man, but especially because he was rich. This was apparent not only from the heavy rows of silver coin which were arranged as buttons on his corpulent person, but still more from the broad, well-filled leather money-belt around his

waist. While he let himself down with all his weight on the deal bench, he undid the belt, and threw it carelessly by his side, wiped the perspiration from his fat, red face with his sleeve, and returned with gracious nods the greetings of the company who bade him welcome.

On the other side of the steps, in the opposite corner, close beside the door of the stable, was a bench with a rickety table placed before it. At this table sat a solitary guest, completely apart from the rest of the company. He was a peasant of a haggard mien, and with a thin, care-worn face, which was covered with an unshorn grayish beard, expressive of wildness and starvation. And this expression was heightened by the man's squalid and dirty attire. A large, greasy bag which lay near him, under the table, and through whose many holes, rags of every sort and color could be seen, gave one to understand that his business was that of a wandering rag-picker. No one concerned himself about the isolated man, but he seemed to observe well, and to hear what-

ever happened at the other tables, for he too did not fail to greet the new comer.

The latter turned himself half around, in the direction whence the voice had come, and stared at the man, as if to convince himself that he had seen and heard aright. Then, with a quick, scornful look of astonishment, he turned, without a word of reply, contemptuously away, and called out in a loud voice to the others : " How comes this ragamuffin here ? Dare he show himself in an inn among honest folk ? "

A sudden flush suffused the outcast's cheeks. He turned aside, and, leaning on his hands, he bent his head, as if to conceal his face ; then he half arose as if struggling with himself whether silently to steal away, and submit to the cruel insult put upon him, or to stay and defy it.

The peasants had up to this time not even observed him ; and when they became aware of his presence, they had fully acquiesced in his silent isolation. And when the rich butcher now spoke so loudly and coarsely in the man's hearing, the good-natured people

were embarrassed; and the person sitting nearest the new guest, an old peasant, with a kind and ruddy face and fine white moustache, could not find it in his heart to answer the rich man otherwise than in half-whispered words: "It's the rag-picker, Alisi! He's on his rounds looking for rags."

"Here in the wilderness? At the cross-roads?"

"Or he's probably heard that we are all summoned here by the court. You must know that we peasants of Osterbrunn have a dispute with these hungry wretches of Westerbrunn, touching the landmarks of the forest belonging to our community, and the lines are to be run to-day. Perhaps he too is going there?"

"But wasn't he a long time ago turned out of house and home?"

"Yes, he was. His property was sold by the court a long time ago. But he thinks injustice was done him, and that he should get his own again, and he always appears where the communities assemble, as he thinks he

would prejudice his rights if he stayed away. Yet no one notices him. Let him alone!"

"But that shall not be!" exclaimed the butcher again, as imperiously and loudly as before. "Such a man should not be suffered any longer in the community; and before three weeks are over, he must be out of the village as if he had never been in it. Wasn't there a *haberfeld* held over him last harvest? That's certainly worse than if he had been put in jail, or made to stand in the pillory. With such a man I won't waste any time—but you don't understand this at all. You're peasants, and always will be."

The insulted man sat unmoved, as if suddenly paralyzed; and the peasants listened, and nodded with constrained smiles.

"We did not see before who was seated at the little table yonder," said the gray-beard again; "for we have been wondering how it happens that we see you coming here to-day, Herr Staudinger, on foot, and all alone. Are you going to the meeting, too?"

"Ain't I obliged to do it?" answered the

stout man, with rekindled anger. "I ordered my man Stephen to go to Unterwies with my Swiss wagon ; but he didn't get there, and is most likely boozing somewhere in a beer-house, the rascal ! So I have been forced to come thus far on shank's mare. A man must bestir himself now if he wants to get on in his business ; there is no more reliance to be placed on servants. And with you peasants, a man can't be enough on his guard, for you are one and all a set of scoundrels."

The peasants laughed again. They understood that the rich cattle-dealer, who was well known to them, condescended to crack his broad jokes at their expense.

"And then such a hot day !" continued he ; "as if we were still in the dog-days, and not in October. And as I was near by, I went out of the way, around by Grundner's, from up by Steinberg, and thought I would get hold of a pair of fine calves there, and I have certainly made a regular butcher's walk of it !"

"How so, didn't you finish your business ?" said one.

"No," said the butcher, and laughed in advance over the new joke he was about to make. "I didn't find Grundner at all; for he has finished his business thoroughly. Yesterday evening he put the last touch to it, and is dead."

"What! Dead? Old Grundner?" cried out with one voice the men sitting nearest; and like lightning the news ran through the whole company of peasants. Words of regret, expressions of astonishment, were heard on all sides; and it all showed that the deceased must have been not merely a well-known man, but an honest fellow too, who had the respect and friendship of all who knew him. A couple of old men interchanged quiet and significant glances, as if they would say: we know best what kind of a man he was, and what the whole country round has lost in him, and how difficult it will be to find any one to take his place.

The buzz of conversation became more excited. Every one wished to know how it had happened, and what had occurred so suddenly

to a man still so vigorous—in whom, in spite of his seventy years, there were no indications of old age, and whose natural force was still unabated. Others, however, thought that the last time they saw him, old Grundner, who was usually so sturdy and cheerful, did not seem to be himself quite, as he was a year before; and at the last harvest, weakness had come upon him, from which he was unable to rally. He had never been in the habit of giving himself rest, and had toiled and worked early and late; and if any one ever wanted his help, he was ready at any hour of the day or night.

And again the old fellows looked at each other significantly, and nodded, as if to say: if we dared to speak, we could best tell all that he has done.

“But how is this?” exclaimed Meister Staudinger, interrupting the discourse, in which he took no interest, and striking on the table with his stick, so that the tankards danced again, and the plates rattled. “Can’t I get any beer in this house? By heavens,

the waiter-girl don't hurt her shins against the cellar steps. If I were the landlord of this inn, I'd teach her how to jump."

"Yet no one has ever died of thirst at the cross-roads!" quietly answered the girl, who just at that moment had come down the steps, tankard in hand, and had overheard the last words. "And as for the teaching, it always takes two for that business."

The girl presented a peculiarly beautiful, and almost surprising appearance in this company; and in her peasant costume, her well-rounded yet neat figure harmonized perfectly with her strong yet refined countenance. Her face, set off by luxuriant braids of light-brown hair, was very pale; but its fresh tint showed that it was not because of ill health, but only a rare delicacy and softness. Around her small mouth, always ready to smile, hovered a pleasant roguishness; but as a check upon this, a resolute earnestness dwelt in her brown eyes, so that the arch expression did not prevail, though the whole countenance, at the first glance, attracted by its winning good nature,

yet, at the same time, repelled by its severe reserve. It seemed as if a being, accustomed to refined surroundings, had from necessity taken refuge in rougher attire and circumstances; and now withdrawn into herself, she watched cautiously that no disturber should profanely enter the sanctuary of her privacy.

She turned with the tankard to the place where the outcast was sitting.

"Hey there!" cried out the butcher, who had looked at and listened to her with astonishment. "Has the girl no eyes in her head? On my table! The beer belongs to me! Here!"

"This man here ordered it first," answered the girl, quietly; while she placed the tankard before the man near the table, with the customary "God bless it!"

"Well, he might have waited, when one of us is here—" He did not finish, for the girl, placing her foot on the first step, stood directly before him, and looked him so steadily and severely in the face, with her great, dark eyes, that he forthwith lost the thread of his remark.

"Wait?" said she. "Why wait? A poor man's groat is worth exactly as much as that of anybody else, even if it were the richest cattle or grain-dealer in the world; and I have always been taught that first come, first served."

With that she disappeared into the house, and left the butcher to his astonishment, who sat there with open mouth and staring eyes.

"Zounds," he cried out at last, almost stammering; "here is something new again! I'd like to know whether the landlord has hired this girl to spoil your appetite, for she is certainly an impertinent wench, and insults the guests. What's this sweet one called?—this pretty one? Where does she come from? Does any one know where this sort's raised?"

The waiter-girl came back, and brought the long-desired beer, with the appurtenances, as amicably as if nothing had happened. She poured out a full glass from the frothing pitcher, and uttered her frank "God bless it." The butcher acted as if he was not aware of her presence. He sat with averted face, and

neglected to make the usual response to the greeting, so that she could pledge him, and thus welcome the guest according to the old custom.

“Franzi,” said the old Moustache, after she had good-naturedly retired, “is a good girl, and an honest one. No one can say any wrong of her; but it is true that she is rather untamed. It will soon be a year since she came here as waiter-girl; but where she came from, that I will not tell you.”

“Why not?” exclaimed the butcher, inquisitively.

The peasant, pleased at the chance of joking him, replied, to the great amusement of all, “Because I don’t know myself.”

“It seems to me,” chimed in another, “that I’ve heard tell something about the girl. Isn’t she a poor creature without any parents? Wasn’t she brought up at the Oak Farm?”

“We’ll ask the schoolmaster,” said the first speaker; “he’s just laid down his cards, and is filling his pipe, till there is a new deal.

He can tell us, for he must know it all from the church register, as Oak Farm belongs to his community, and Franzi must have gone to his school. Anyhow, we'll ask."

To the schoolmaster, who was a stout man of about fifty years old, and in whom the cares and privations of his condition were not apparent, it was rather pleasant to pause in the game, which was played quite innocently for beans, and tell his story, with many digressions. Thus he could dazzle his hearers with his familiarity with everything which concerned in any way the school district, and those who had ever sat before him on the school benches.

"You are quite right," said he, on being spoken to by the peasant, while he stepped nearer and lighted his pipe with a strip of paper, and puffed out heavy clouds of smoke. "You are quite right to come to the right shop and ask me. The children in my school are to me like the fruit-trees I raise in the school garden, and graft and bud. When the little sprigs have grown tall, and are taken up and transplanted to another garden, often many

miles distant, they do not on that account become strange to me. I observe, whenever I can, how they grow and thrive, even if it is only over the hedge ; and have cut the suckers from around many a one of them in their new gardens, so that the crowns of the fruit-trees might not be injured ; or I have bound it around with stakes to keep it straight and pretty. So I act with the children. I go after them and keep them in my eye, although they may be grown-up people and servants, or have even become fathers and mothers. I have also now and then tried to help forward or to restrain them with the pruning knife. But alas ! human beings are not so patient and pliant as my trees."

Meister Standinger had just taken a lusty pull out of the tankard. He now clapped the lid too, and cried out with a sneering laugh, "Oh yes, you'd like to put us to school again ; but we're too old for that."

"Do not be impatient, Sir," said the school-master, measuring the fat man with the knowing eye of a gardener who observes a

gnarled trunk of the vicious kind; "there is nothing so very remarkable in the story that you should be so anxious to hear it. It is only something which happens every day and everywhere, and I tell it only to prevent the evil opinions and false rumors which might arise from a half knowledge, and which might do the girl harm—for Franzi is an honest, upright girl, as she was formerly a good and diligent child at school, in whom I took much interest. She was brought up at the Oak Farm. You know well the fine, rich estate which looks so grandly from the heights near Seewinkle, like a small castle. Madame Aicher, heaven rest her soul, was never content with having two sons and no daughter; the more so that when her sons should grow up and become stout and capable fellows, it would be still more lonely for her, as there would be no girl about her to lend a helping hand to assist her and be with her always when her sons had left the house or married off. She did not cease to think of this, and so impressed it on her husband, that they determined to take a stranger's child into

the house ; and if it should turn out to be of a good sort, to adopt it as their own. So they went into the city, and to the Orphan Asylum, and scrutinized all the poor children who were nourished and educated there at the expense of the community ; and indeed there were not a few of them at that time, for during the past winter the cholera had raged in the town and had made many orphans. They saw little Franzi there, and she pleased the farmer's wife very much, because she looked her in the face so straight and frankly ; and when asked whether she would go home with them, she hung so confidently to her apron, that they took the little girl home with them. She was then about five years old. The managers of the association and the Sisters of Mercy, who take care of the children in the Orphan Asylum were all very glad at the good fortune which had fallen to the child's lot. Of her parents, not much more could be learned than that they were poor but respectable people ; and, if I mistake not, the man was a journeyman mechanic — a carpenter or turner. Both her

parents died the same night, of cholera ; and as no relation came forward, or could be found, the magistrate was obliged to provide for the friendless child, and therefore placed her in the Orphan Asylum."

"If you have nothing better to tell than this," exclaimed the butcher, ill-naturedly, "why, don't talk. Orphan Asylum! Cholera! Is that the style of talk for a man in a beer-house. It actually spoils the taste of one's beer."

He laughingly raised the tankard, and put it to his mouth for a strong swig ; but his laughter no longer sounded so arrogantly loud, and after he had taken a mere sip, he set the tankard down again. It seemed as if the beer had ceased to cheer him.

"Is it worth the trouble to make so much fuss about such a person? If you go on praising and extolling her, it will at last come to this—what I have already said to myself—that it is most likely that she has repaid with ingratitude, and God knows what, the people up there at the Oak Farm, who took her in

and brought her up. Otherwise she would certainly still be at the Oak Farm, and not sailing around here among people as a waiter-girl."

"You do her wrong," said the schoolmaster, shaking his head. "You shouldn't tear up a young tree in that short way! Many a tree that seems withered at the first glance, will still bud when the proper time comes. Franzi has always been diligent and honest, and has bravely stuck by the people at the Oaks, and they have also loved and treated her as their own child, although things have gone a little differently from what they imagined. It was as if heaven wished to try them; for after a while the stork came back to the Oak Farm, and a little lamb of a girl fulfilled perfectly the wish of the mother's heart. But she was careful not to let the adopted orphan child feel she had now become superfluous, and so they all lived peacefully and harmoniously together, the two brothers and the two girls, who scarcely knew that they were not sisters.

"But the time came when both the old people followed each other quickly from the

world, without having made any arrangement as to what should be done with their property when they should be no more. Then there may have been strife and quarreling ; for this is certain, that the bond which had held these four beings together, was loosened, and that they separated from each other (like seeds in a bursting pod) to the four quarters of the heavens. The younger brother, the forester, who had studied for a couple of years, had his portion paid out to him, and went to the town, where he went into the business of selling wood. The daughter remained a long time with her aunt, who is childless, and owns a fine farm over there near the miller's. Later, she was persuaded to go to the town, where her brother lives. Franzi must have thanked the people of Oak Farm, who are now in their graves, for the love they showed her, and for having brought her up to industry and labor ; and she resolved to go out to service. But the eldest brother, Sixt, has kept the farm, and takes care of it, so that it is a joy even to see it. This is one of the shoots from my nursery

in which I take much pleasure; and though it is quite a walk, I can't deny myself the pleasure of going over to the Oak Farm every week or so. I am always delighted to see how neat and fresh everything looks, as if just shelled out of an egg, and how all things accord together, showing one mind and purpose throughout, so that one might well say that it is really a model establishment."

"Ho! ho!" laughed the butcher, who could not bear, in his irritation, to hear anybody praised. "You're free with your praise, Mr. Schoolmaster; you put him higher indeed than the king of diamonds!"

"Yes, yes!" said the old gray-beard, assentingly. "It cannot be otherwise, Sir. Sixt, the young man at the Oak Farm, is one, the like of whom is not thickly sown in the land. A complete farmer, as his father was before him, and a thorough man too, who carries an honest head under his hat, and an honest heart under his shirt. All who know him, like the man and respect him. No one in the village does anything of importance without asking

the advice of Sixt. And when the choice is made again in the community, he will be overseer. That is as certain as if he had his commission already signed and in his pocket. And when it pleases him to lead a bride to Oak Farm, for he still lives single and alone, then every door will certainly be thrown wide open to the marriage procession. Though he may not know it, yet he is as neat a lad as you can find from Leizach, all the way over to Mangfall."

"For aught I care, you may set him in gold," growled the butcher. "Your wonderful fellow on Oak Farm, and that treasure of a waiter-girl, too! If he would strip himself of a little of his glory, he would be on the same level with her. Now, after I know all, I say seriously, that if she were the right kind of a person, she would have remained at the Oak Farm like a decent servant. But when she got her freedom, she was off in a minute. That I understand as well as if I'd been there. Now she's off, away from work, to roam about and amuse herself."

The schoolmaster had smoked his pipe out, and knocked the dead ashes upon the ground. He was silent a moment, while he regarded the stout butcher searchingly and disapprovingly.

"You are clearly prejudiced against that girl," he then said; "and you therefore should not judge so severely at first sight and on appearances. I know by experience from my trees, and the fruit they bear, that those apples which have a pale color and a rough exterior are generally the richest in juice and perfume. But in the large and shining ones, in the beautiful full-cheeked ones, there is generally a worm at the core."

He then turned about and went to his seat to continue his game for beans. The butcher did not answer, but rested his hands on his stick, and stared out into the blue skies, as if he was reflecting upon something of the greatest importance. The others were also silent. No one knew exactly the best way to break the pause of general embarrassment.

"The history of the people at the Oak

Farm by no means ends here. The younger brother, the wood-dealer, is there again.

"I have heard of that," answered the gray-beard. "They say he intends to buy himself a place somewhere, and be a farmer again. I hardly believe he will bring it to pass. I lately drove to the town, to see about carrying some wood from the Saline Forest; there I met him with his sister Susi. Both of them have become regular city people, and will never be of any use among us country people; and I have heard it said that he has become terribly rich in this short time. He has dealt in houses, and has loaned money; and in this way, in the city, the money flies into the window to you."

"And how is it with Susi? Does she remain in the city?" asked a young peasant.

"By no means," answered the old man. "She has to stay with her aunt, her mother's sister, whom she used to live with, who is very old, and will not last long, they say. Her aunt wants her, although Susi does not find much pleasure in it. Yet she can't do other-

wise, for one does not willingly throw aside such an inheritance; and with such a prospect, you must strain a point a little."

The noise of a carriage approaching interrupted the conversation. The old man placed his hands over his eyes, and looked toward it.

"There comes something of a city build," said he. That must be the Bailiff, who comes to measure the forest, and to run the boundary lines."

"No," said another; "there is nothing of an embroidered collar. The gentleman looks more like a priest; and there is a woman, too, with him."

"Now we have it," said the old man; "now I recognize them. If you name the wolf, he comes running. That is the wood-dealer of Oak Farm, and his sister Susi. Why do they come here?"

"They want to meet their brother Sixt, of course," cried the schoolmaster from the card-table, whose attention had become just then active while he was shuffling the cards.

"He does seem to be rich, and he must be

coming here to see about the marking of the boundary."

"That is true, and it must be so, too," replied the old man; and as it is of so much importance to Herr Staudinger, he can see the whole family of Oak Farm at once—here on the same spot together."

The butcher did not reply, and turned to the direction where the carriage was still approaching. But the most of those present looked toward the persons coming with so much the greater interest, and whispered to each other their criticisms on the team, the wagon, and its owner.

"It is so, sure enough," said the young peasant again. "That is Susi. Many a pleasant time I have had with her; but I would not have known her again! What an active, healthy country girl she was only half a year ago; and now—"

"Yes," answered the old man, "the city once went wild over her beauty. One would think she must be sick unto death, so pale and miserable she looks."

In the meanwhile the carriage arrived, and stopped before the inn. A fine Hungarian basket-wagon it was, drawn by a pair of beautiful sorrels, which, amid their stamping and snorting, were held in subjection by the careful guidance of the driver. He was dressed entirely in black. This circumstance, as well as his narrow, white shirt-collar, which was turned over an equally dark neckcloth, made it readily conceivable why the peasants had remarked on his clerical appearance, especially when he took his hat off in salutation, and disclosed his short-cut hair. His face was well formed, and animated by a friendly smile. In his blue eyes there beamed a rare gentleness, although they never rested long on any one object; and a quick furtive glance frequently gave to his entire expression something knavish and deceitful. The appearance also of the girl seated beside him, did not contradict the observations which the country people had already interchanged at their approach. There was little to be seen of her dress except that it was of city style. All that was visible

of her delicate form was enveloped in a wrapper of large folds, as if, in spite of the heat of the sun, she desired to guard herself against the frost. She reclined in the corner of the carriage, and her beautifully-formed, pale countenance, entwined in jet black hair, had sunk deep into the pillows. Her eyes were closed, as if she were exhausted by the journey, or sick unto death.

The man, getting down, handed the reins to the boy who had hurried up, and, at the same time, cried, with a sweet laugh, in a touchingly tender tone, as if about to greet his oldest and most trusted friend: "See! See! The stout old fellow is still in the world! It is a pleasure to see an old friend again. Be careful and kind to those horses. You know that it is written that the merciful man is merciful to his beast. None but old familiar faces," continued he, looking around the circle. "I like this. I might almost think I had never been away. Ah! see! The schoolmaster here, too! That is the greatest pleasure of all. A man whom I have to thank for so

much. Don't you know me, schoolmaster?" cried he, advancing and offering his hand to the person addressed.

"Why should I not?" answered the schoolmaster; but he did not remove his hands and eyes from the pipe which he had just begun to refill.

"Truly, truly, why shouldn't he?" cried the butcher; "but a short time ago he was keeping school for us, and told us that he knew every tree in his nursery, however crooked it might have grown."

A sharp side glance was directed by the new comer toward the joker, but in a moment the old friendly smile was back again.

"See! see! Herr Staudinger here, too," he cried, somewhat affectedly. "Always sound and well, as I see, and still always the old man full of jokes! You have not allowed yourself to be seen in the city for a long time. You are indeed—"

He did not complete his sentence, for his eyes were fixed on Franzi, who just then came out of the house to inquire the wants of the

new guests. He was so surprised, that the words remained unuttered, and something sparkled in his eyes which did not harmonize at all with their usually mild and tranquil look.

“Franzi!” he cried, running up to the girl, “is it really you? I would sooner have expected the heavens to fall, than to find you at the cross-roads, as a waitress. You have become more beautiful than I ever saw you before. Let me look at you well, and give you a hearty greeting!”

So saying, he had approached nearer to her, and was about to place his arm in a familiar way around her waist; but before he well knew how, she had escaped from him.

“I thank you kindly,” she cried; “and on my part, too, wish you well, Herr Aicher.”

“Herr Aicher!” he exclaimed, somewhat disconcerted. “Do you speak thus to me, and act so strangely? Have we not grown up together? Have you not been my foster-sister and my playmate?”

“Do you recollect that still?” said she, shortly and coldly, as she passed in front of

him. "Since you have forgotten it for so many years, how does it come now suddenly into your mind? That play is played out, and I think there is somebody yonder who needs me more than you."

By this time she had reached the carriage. The rebuffed man stood for a moment irresolute and confounded. It seemed as if his equanimity was about to leave him, but it was only an expression which flitted over his face like lightning over a clear evening sky. As quickly as it disappeared, the stereotyped courteous smile came back ; and with an expression like that of one who disapproves indeed of the faults of a dear, spoilt child, but still excuses them, he turned, shrugging his shoulders to the rest of the audience.

"You ought not to be surprised or vexed, Herr Aicher," said the stout butcher, with disdainful satisfaction, and shoved him so far to the side, that the small man in black had scarcely standing room. "She will broil no other sort of sausage for you. That, indeed, is the style of the rough wench."

“Surprise! Vexation!” answered Aicher, mildly, “I was not thinking of it. You know, indeed, youth has no discretion. She knows that she has a pretty face, and will be pardoned much on that account. She does not reflect how it stands written, that beauty perishes like the grass which in the morning is fresh and beautiful, and before the evening is mowed down and withered. Is that not true? Is that not it, schoolmaster?”

Without awaiting the reply of the one addressed, he turned to the host, who had come to salute the distinguished guest, and, twisting his green cap in his hand, asked for his orders in reference to dinner.

“What are you thinking of, landlord?” cried Aicher, as his host was recommending to him the tenderness of his chickens, and commending a piece of juicy roast venison, which you might crush with your tongue.

“Do you consider me so poor a Christian, as to eat meat on an enjoined Fast-day? On holy Ember-Wednesday? No! no! Cook me merely something light, some trifle.”

"Perhaps you would like pea-soup, with baked marrow-dumplings."

"That will do. Yes, and an omelette; and if perhaps you have a small fish put away on ice—"

"Unfortunately not. Fish are hard to get here in the midst of the forest; but I have a bunch of snipe, which the hunters brought in yesterday."

"Well now, landlord, that is excellent: well larded and slowly cooked with lemon-juice, they make quite a pleasant dish. And snipe is indeed an exceptional bird. They are not meat. As they feed on fish only, one may be allowed to eat them even on Good-Friday. And if you have, besides, to finish off with, a little pastry."

"Perhaps you would like dumplings? My wife cooks them deliciously."

"That will do. You observe, my host, that thus we keep our conscience free of a heavy sin, and enjoy ourselves upon one's little Fast-days. May I invite Herr Standinger? And perhaps you will come too, schoolmaster?"

The stout man did not refuse, but the schoolmaster thanked him for his kindness.

"I have already taken my dinner," he said, with a good-natured smile; "and the stomach of a schoolmaster cannot stand any more, especially such rich dishes."

In the meanwhile, Franzi had gone to the carriage, where, forgotten and unobserved by her brother, the pale girl awoke from a sickly half slumber, and, looking dreamily around, began to take off her wrapping. Her surprise, when she saw the hand of Franzi offered in salutation, and as she looked into that open, blooming face, and into those dark, true-hearted eyes, was not less lively than her brother's, but it was purer and brighter. The deathly paleness of her cheeks was dissipated in a moment by a glowing blush, which suffused neck and brow, but only to be drawn off again with the next beat of her pulse. Her eyes were fixed on that kind face. The words of greeting died upon her half-parted lips, choked by her emotion. Franzi was obliged to break the silence first.

"Is it possible? Is it you or your ghost? You are again in the country; actually not in the city!"

Susi could not speak yet—her falling tears prevented her. She only shook her head violently in reply.

"But now I see, for the first time, how pale you are," Franzi resumed, sympathizingly. "You certainly are not at all well; you cannot bear traveling."

"Yes, yes," Susi uttered at last. "It must indeed be so. It was so cool this morning, and this air—I cannot bear the open air any more, Franzi; it hurts me so, here, in my breast—deep in it. Oh! it hurts me fearfully."

"Come down, then, you poor dear," said Franzi, while she embraced with a strong arm the slender form which leaned against her, and lifted it like a feather to the ground. "Come with me into the house. I will take you to my room, to my bed. There you can rest quietly, and sleep a little. With sleep, those red cheeks will soon come back, which I used to see you with."

The invalid looked at her again with a glance which appeared as if it wished to penetrate her soul with heartfelt complaint and longing. She breathed deeply, and drew her thin, delicate hands over her brow, as if she were thinking of something which she sought in vain.

“Yes,” she whispered, while she pressed Franzi’s hand cordially; “lead me where you will, Franzi. It is a good sign that you have met me. Yes, Franzi, I will go with you.”

The two girls soon disappeared into the house. The country people resumed again their seats, their tankards and discourse. Between the butcher and wood-dealer, who appeared to have come quietly to an understanding, there had arisen an intercourse which was apparently as important as it was intimate. The sleepy influence of mid-day was perceptible. Many a one nodded over his tankard, and there was little to do when Franzi came back again, after a while, to lay and set the dinner-table for the guests.

At the same time, the rag-picker appeared

again. The conversation must have been disagreeable to him. He had emptied his tankard almost at one draught, and had then disappeared behind a hedge of the orchard. There, in the shade of the plum-tree and the hedges-roses, on which the berries were already getting blue, and the buds red, he cast himself on his back in the grass, and looked as if he wished to forget, in sleep, the grief and cares of his life. If any one had troubled himself about the man, it would not have escaped him that the sleeper often arose and drew out of his rag-bag a good-sized wicker bottle, and took a long draught. The evidences of this were unmistakable, as he came around the house corner with glazed eyes and flushed cheeks, and, hiccupping drunken words, staggered to the seat which he had previously occupied.

He just then met Franzi, who, coming out of the house, had stopped on the steps, and was either reflecting on what had occurred, or considering whether there was anything for her to do. With a stupid cunning laugh, the rag-picker stepped behind her, and grasped

her quickly around the waist. "Sweetheart," stammered he, "what are you thinking about? Are you thinking of a day for your wedding?"

The startled girl cried out, and sought with a sudden movement to throw off the hand and arm of the drunkard; but he was stronger and quicker than she, and, frustrating her attempt, held her still more firmly in his embrace.

"Do not struggle so, sweetheart," exclaimed he, with a hoarse disgusting laugh. "I only wish to return thanks for your kindness to me! You think the rag-picker has no respect for himself. I do not allow anything to be given to me, and wish to repay you before all the people with a little kiss."

"Let me go, rag-picker, or it will not be good for you!" gasped the girl, while she continued struggling in vain to free herself from his foul embrace. It availed her nothing, for her resistance only aroused the drunkard still more.

"Do not struggle," exclaimed he again. "The more you resist, the more am I bent upon it. I must know how a kiss will taste

from that mouth, which can speak so boldly; and even if I have to fight the devil for it, a kiss I must have."

The position of the girl, seized from behind and unawares, was one of great disadvantage, and the rag-picker had almost overpowered her.

"Are you not ashamed of yourselves," exclaimed she, glowing with anger, to the peasants, who looked on with smiling indifference at the wrestling and struggling, in which they could see nothing out of the way. "Are you men, and will you not help a girl against such an outlaw?"

The peasants did not move. The pious for-ester had gone aside a few steps, that he might not see the outrage. The fat butcher laughed scornfully, and exclaimed, "Help! not that, indeed. You should not be afraid of your good friend, to whom you are so kind."

The only one who offered assistance, was the schoolmaster. But the old man could not oppose forcibly this man, excited and reckless with drink. He confined himself to good-natured persuasion.

"Shame on you, Alisi," said he, seizing him by the arm. "You always complain when people have a low, bad opinion of you. It is no wonder they have, when you behave yourself so."

These good-natured words had no more effect than water sprinkled on a blazing fire. The rag-picker became still more angry. He pushed back the schoolmaster so violently, that he reeled.

"Who has anything to say against it?" exclaimed he. "We two have to fight this out alone. I should like to see who will interfere."

Already he held fast in his arms the girl, rendered almost breathless by her resistance, when, struck by a strong fist, he fell down in a heap, and rolled under the table, as if he would never stand on his feet again. Between him and Franzi, stood a young farmer with a fine slender frame, fresh and strong as a young oak. Raising his fist over the prostrate man and putting his foot on his breast, he stood like a victorious athlete over his conquered adversary, and called out :

“Lie there you beast, you good-for-nothing fellow, and do not stir, or I may forget myself, and consider your empty pate as a drum. If you wish to be in public, learn first how to behave yourself. Until then, crawl into the stable where you belong, and sleep off your drunkenness.”

Having lost all courage, and being almost sobered, the rag-picker scrambled up from the floor, and sneaked away like an ill-tempered cur, who minds less the kick he has received, than the eye of the man, fixed clearly and firmly upon him, in whom he has found his lord and master. The others, without uttering a word, remained in the same position in which they were at the moment of the unexpected appearance of the young man. His bearing and manner were as if he might be inclined to demand serious explanation of any unseemly words or obstreperous laughter.

Meister Staudinger, in embarrassment, began to put on his money-belt; the wood-dealer sought some fitting words with which to greet his brother; but with hearty approbation the

eye of the schoolmaster rested upon the new comer. Franzi's eyes also were fixed upon him; but what shone out of them, is not to be expressed in words. It was not surprise, for she thought it very natural that he had come between them like an angel from heaven; it could not be called joy, for it was too quiet for that; it was not ecstasy, for that is overpowering; it was a quiet inward sense of happiness and security, which, forgetful of self, clings modestly to some revered being, almost without a wish, and entirely without expectation, occupied only with a silent adoration of his excellence.

With burning cheeks and flashing eyes, she stood with arms crossed upon her breast, as if she but awaited the commands of her ruling spirit to bow in obedience to them. Words she found not, even when her preserver, with a friendly and somewhat condescending smile on his lips, stood before her.

"I came just in the nick of time," he said, with a deep, full voice. "How are you, Franzi? Are you still frightened? Compose yourself.

The rag-picker will leave you in peace hereafter ; and many others also, I think."

"How do you do, Sixt?" answered she, but immediately stopped to correct herself. "How are you, Herr Aicher? I meant to say."

"None of that," said he, shortly; "I am no Herr. I am a farmer, and wish to be nothing else. Let it be only Sixt."

"If I only knew what to say or do to thank you—Sixt."

"The best thanks would be for you to come with me. This is no place for you. You are much too good for a waitress, whom every lout considers to be a handkerchief which he may lay hold of with his greasy hands."

Franzi cast down her eyes. She began to recover from her confusion.

"One can be honest and true in any position," she said, half softly, but resolutely.

"That is very true," said he, "and the right sort of people, like you, can do it; but you have just seen what may happen. If the road to the church leads round the mountain—a better and more direct road too—why should

I seek out a bad and rough road, and go up over the mountain? A pang went through my heart when I heard that you were living in this hole, and had engaged yourself as a waitress. Why did you do it, Franzi?"

She cast down her eyes and blushed.

"That I cannot tell," she answered, with an evident struggle, "to any one—not even to you," she added, as if she wished to soften the impression conveyed by her words. "I have resolved it shall remain a secret, until I have accomplished that which I have in mind."

"That must be something very special," said he; "but I do not wonder that you are silent; you were always so. I never once knew why you left the Oak Farm suddenly, just as death comes, in the middle of the night. Is that also a secret?"

"No," said she, and looked in his face with a firm glance. "Indeed I do not talk of it freely, but there is no secret about it; and whoever wished, could easily have discovered that at the time. I did not leave Oak Farm of my own accord. I was obliged to."

"Obliged?" asked he, and stepped back in astonishment.

"Think of the day, Sixt, when I was at Oak Farm for the last time. You and your brother and Susi had been together to the court, in reference to the estate and the division of it, and were seated in a room at the table together, and had settled your accounts, and spoken with the overseer and his assistants with reference to this and that. I was in an adjoining room when you arrived, and thought you would not remain long, and so I waited that you might not see me come out and believe that I wished to overhear anything. But you did not go out at all, and so I was, as it were, a prisoner; and even if I had put my apron over my head, and taken all pains not to understand anything, yet still I must have heard, when the overseer asked what my position was, and what it would be now; and when the reply was given, that there was no doubt about that, it explained itself. The parents who had brought me up as a farmer's daughter, and had considered me as a child of the house,

they were now dead. I could indeed remain at Oak Farm, but my position must be changed, and I must become just like the other servant girls."

Young Aicher had listened attentively.

"Yes," said he; "but if you heard that, you also knew who said it—the Forester."

"I know very well," said she, with a repellent gesture, "no one else said so, but no one contradicted it, neither Susi nor you, Sixt. And when I went away during the night, with my little bundle, like an ordinary wandering servant, no one detained me, and no one asked why I went."

"You are right, Franzi," answered the farmer. "I did not send after you. I thought to myself, that whoever upon such slight cause, suddenly and without farewell, goes away from the house in which she has been brought up, will not remain, and must have good reason for not doing so, and one must not hinder her. But indeed I asked after you, and learned that you had engaged yourself as a waitress at this wretched place; and now, that you—but all

that may be changed now and improved. Give up being a waitress ; be again a respectable farm servant, and come to me at Oak Farm."

She looked down again on the ground and said nothing, but she shook her head decidedly, as if to put away something of which the bare thought terrified her.

"You must not be obstinate and bear malice," continued he ; "to a fair proposition, a civil answer is due. Come again to Oak Farm ; it is still your home."

The tone of the speaker had become somewhat more earnest.

Franzi hesitated in her answer, and seemed to be distressed.

"Certainly, certainly, my home is there—my dear, good home," said she, repressing her emotion. "But to go back again,—No, that will not do at all. I cannot, Sixt."

"Has any one else done anything to injure you ?"

—"No one."

"Well, at least, tell me why not ? Why will you never come to Oak Farm ?"

"I cannot, and I will not tell why."

"Ha, again the secret! Well, if it is so, I will not force myself into your confidence. I have done my part, and have offered you my hand; if you do not take it, it is your affair. You must know what you have in your heart, and must see that you are prepared for it. It would have been a pleasure to me, and it is now a great disappointment! There is no more dependence to be placed on domestics and servants. At so large a farm, a trusty person is necessary to me, who would be just such a housekeeper and careful stewardess as you are."

The friendly tone, with the urgings of the farmer, had begun to soften Franzi's heart; but the last words hardened it again, just as in spring a cold blast of wind covers again with a new crust the snow melting under the sun's rays. She had begun to believe that somewhere there was a warmer feeling which prompted the farmer to urge upon her the remembrance of the wishes of her good old foster parents, and the recollections of the

days of her childhood; but his last words betrayed to her that only his own interest had urged him on; it was not the friend of her youth, who longed after his foster sister, but only the wealthy farmer who sought a careful servant maid.

"I cannot, Sixt," said she, much more coolly and decidedly. "I cannot tell you why; you must not worry me."

"Worry?" exclaimed he, passionately, and the angry vein on his brow swelled beneath his curly brown hair. "That did not occur to me. If it worries you to hear of Oak Farm, then this is the last word about it which you shall hear me speak. An Aicher is a suppliant to no man, even were he the king himself."

Sixt turned away quickly and indignantly. Franzi stood for a moment, her hand upon her heart, and her lips opened as if for a word to appease and call him back, but the word remained unspoken, nor did a single sigh escape from her oppressed heart. With an air of resolve she turned again to her occupation, •

and tripped here and there in attendance on the guests.

The Farmer of the Oaks meanwhile was greeted by the schoolmaster with a hearty grasp of the hand, by the butcher with a familiar nod, and by the forester, his brother, with a flood of friendly words, which he answered rather crossly and angrily.

"That is very good in you, Aicher," said Staudinger, as he took a seat at the table, "to be so kind to the girl; she always remains your foster sister, even if she does not deserve that you should help her, for in fact she is herself to blame for it."

"Herself to blame, how can that be?" asked Sixt, lowering; and the butcher did not allow the welcome opportunity to escape him, to relate with becoming observations and gestures what had occurred before.

"Franzi, is what Herr Staudinger relates true?" exclaimed Sixt, after hearing all. "Did you do that? and do you know that a Habermeld has been held against the rag-picker?"

The girl was standing close by the table,

and answered a clear, firm "Yes." From face and look all excitement had vanished. Their eyes were quietly and resolutely fixed upon each other; it was as if two rocks, loosened from their resting-place by the wild waves, were brought against each other in a narrow channel, where there was no escape, so as either to crush themselves in the shock, or else, held fast together by the surrounding pressure, to remain lying in the middle of the rushing waters, rising up like a little island, upon which gradually the moss would fasten, and earth would collect, until from it grass and flowers and sturdy elder bushes might spring up, covering the traces of the conflict and the jagged fissures with peaceful green and a new life.

"And do you know," continued he, "what it means, when a Haberfeld is held against any one? That he is a despised and abandoned man, who can nowhere have a home again; as if, as in old times, a brand were burned upon his brow! Do you know what he has done, this rag-picker? He gave up business and

went begging money from his friends; and because no one would give him any, he set fire to the house over the heads of his own brothers, so that it was burnt down to the ground, and all the cattle were burnt with it; and the old usurers who slept up in the garret were within an ace of perishing in the flames."

"Why should I not know that," responded Franz. "He has been knocked about long enough, in the trial and in prison, until his little property is almost entirely dissipated, and his wife, with two little children, has been obliged to go to the almshouse; but I also know that the court discharged him as innocent, but too late indeed, for when he came out of jail his little property was sold, and his wife and children brought to want and misery."

"Innocent!" exclaimed Staudinger, interrupting her; "that seems to me a queer kind of innocence. He has lied himself out of it; he did it so cunningly, that no proof could be brought against him. The judges of the court were obliged to acquit him, but then you know that every one believes that he did it."

"Yes," said the wood-dealer, "that was the universal opinion, and therefore it just serves him right; for this is just the object of the Haberfeld, that those cunning rogues, against whom one can get no positive proof, should not laugh in their sleeve and go free. I have always heard it said that the voice of the people is the voice of God."

"And I say," exclaimed Franzi, with flashing eyes, "that if this court, which controls matters of life and death, has acquitted any one who has been under grave suspicion, that is also the voice of God—that is a sign from heaven that our God will keep the day of reckoning with him for eternity; and were I a man, I would not raise my hand against him. I would think it a shame to have any part in such a sin and outrage as the Haberfeld is."

"The Haberfeld," said the farmer of the Oaks, who had observed with astonishment Franzi's ardor, "is no outrage, no sin. We farmers here among the mountains have the right to hold our own court in that way, and the right is as old as the mountains themselves."

"If it is so good a custom," said Franzi, "why do you not practice it, then, freely, before all the world and in broad daylight? Why do your judges come secretly together at night, and not venture to show their faces? Would it be no outrage, no sin, if one were entirely ruined for life, when he might be an innocent person? Who is responsible for it, if public opinion should chance not to be true, if the voice of the people should itself err?"

"That is impossible," said the wood-dealer; "for we know that the Haberfeld punishes no one, unless a man of good character and a householder, with life and limb, with arms and honor, vouches for it that the thing is true which is charged upon the accused."

"But indeed it is very remarkable," said the butcher, scornfully, "how the young girl opposes herself to the Haberfeld, and how careful she is lest punishment may come upon some rascal a little too heavily."

"Well, yes," said the forester again; "I think no man need fear the Haberfeld who has a good conscience."

Franzi looked at him with a penetrating gaze, until he cast down his eyes.

“That is true,” said she, almost solemnly; “a good conscience is the best pillow, and one on which one can sleep most quietly; and it remains soft, and does not wear away with time; but it is very good also for one to examine frequently into his heart, and shake up that pillow; and whoever does this rightly and then finds nothing to blame himself with, he may stoop and cast stones at others.”

She turned and went away, and those who remained looked at each other and shook their heads. Sixt had started up at her last words, and walked aside. He was like one to whom a flash of lightning at the dark midnight hour has disclosed for a moment an unknown spot, buried in obscurity. Franz’s removal from the Oak Farm, her giving up the position of farm servant, her refusal to assign a reason for it, and her mysterious manner—all had become clear to him by that one flash of light; she was conscious to herself of some secret crime, the discovery of which she dreaded; a

disgraceful and probably criminal past lay behind her. "What can it be which weighs upon her," murmured he to himself; "it is painful to the girl; so much so, that it almost pains me! But she has separated herself from us, by her own act—why do I then still worry myself about her. She is an utter stranger to me, and shall concern me no more during my life; and if she should chance to come in my way and I could help her, I will not raise a finger to do it."

CHAPTER II.

A SHRILL whistle sounded from out the woods over the plain. They all went out and looked in the direction whence the signal came. At the corner of the wood, under a conspicuous fir-tree, appeared a man, who, holding his hand to his mouth, whistled through his fingers, and waved his hat as a sign for some one to come to him.

"That is the under forester, the taxman, Veitl," said Gray-beard, peering out sharply from under his raised hand. "What does the impudent fellow want? - He acts as if we all ought to go over to him. But he is not to be trusted. It may not be the first time he has made April fools of us!"

"He has no further to come to us than we to him," said the farmer of Oaks, and returned to his seat. "If he really has anything to say to us, he will come over here when he sees that

we do not trouble ourselves about his whistling and signs."

The tone and manner of the young man were so quiet and resolute, that his words decided the others likewise, and laughing, they all resumed their seats. Laughing, too, they watched the man at the woods, until, wearied and convinced of the uselessness of his efforts, he began to advance to the Cross-Roads Inn.

"He must have a message to deliver, and an important one too," said the butcher. "He has even begun to run. Probably he brings some news about the forest survey, of which I have heard."

"You may be right," said the Farmer of Oaks. "I have been wondering for some time that the Bailiff has not yet appeared, and also that not a single one of our opponents from Westerbrunn has yet arrived. Can anything have interfered?"

"It is really no other than the taxman, Veitl," said the gray-beard, when the man had approached near enough to be recognized. "And how hot he looks! What is the matter

Veitl, that you come here at such a snail's pace? What news have you?"

"Do not ask many questions," said the panting man, seizing without hesitation the nearest beer-jug to moisten his dry throat. "Do not keep stretching your eyes so, but get afoot at once. I came here running like a weasel from lower Seekar. The Bailiff is there, and has already waited an hour and a half for you, in reference to the forest survey."

"That must be a mistake," said the Farmer of Oaks, drawing a paper from his pocket. "Here is one of the official notes, just as it came from the office—and there it stands in black and white—that the forest survey will take place to-day, that the Osterbrunners and Westerbrunners must be at the Cross-Roads Inn at noon, and that the Bailiff will also come here, and will go over the whole disputed forest boundary with us."

"What difference does that slip of paper make to me," answered the under forester. "In spite of that, it is just as I say, and no other way. Herr Bailiff has changed his mind.

The head forester told him he knew of a splendid buck which always ranged about lower Seekar, and Herr Bailiff has gone for a little while to the hunting stand there."

"Is that it?" said the old man, curling up his moustache. "And they direct us here, and let us wait, do they? And the Bailiff goes a hunting, and our business, involving the welfare of two entire communities, is to be thrust aside, and to be settled when it suits his convenience!"

"Well, well, neighbor," said the farmer of Oaks, interrupting him, having meanwhile spoken with the schoolmaster and with several others, "we only lose time in this discussion; we have a full hour before us ere we can reach Seekar. But how will it be with our opponents, the Westerbrunners?"

"Oh, they know all about it," said Veitl. "They have already been some time at the place. When Herr Bailiff started for the hunt early this morning, he had to pass by Westerbrunn. It lies scarcely a gun-shot out of his way. He sent there and made the appointment with them."

The moustache of the old man was in more imminent danger, so furiously did he tug at it.

"Is that it?" growled he. "Indeed, matters grow better all the time! And so our opponents are already at the place with the official, and are filling his ears with talk, are they? Is that right? Both sides ought to be there, that neither may have the advantage of the other. So it ought to be, according to all laws, both human and divine!"

"Indeed, that is so," exclaimed the others, but we have heard already that the new Herr Bailiff is a very peculiar person!"

"Well, well, neighbors," said Sixt, "it is just a new broom, they always sweep clean! It would have been better if we had all been together and had gone over the forest in company; however, much useless discussion and quarreling may have been avoided, but the misfortune must be borne; we will also have our say; and even if the Westerbrunners have such a start, they cannot talk away the trees and rocks which form the boundary."

"But meanwhile we are considered fools!"

exclaimed the old man, who would not be silenced. "We must sit here and lose our time."

"Do not be so crabbed and cross-grained, Grubhofer," laughed Sixt; "you must not be so particular! His little bit of hunting must not be charged so high to the worshipful Herr! and you, at least, have not lost your time; one may see by your red nose that you have been busy with the pitcher; it will do you no harm to walk a little way and cool it!"

With a vigorous swing, he threw over his shoulder the heavy, long-handled ax which was his usual companion, cast his jacket upon it, and strode toward the forest. As if at the word of command, the others followed, Graybeard among the number, though he could not leave off grumbling to himself and gesticulating. Soon it was as lonely at the Cross-Roads as it had been animated before; only the butcher Staudinger, and the pious wood-dealer, remained behind for dinner, which the host had just begun to put on the table, while he called out to those going away, to return, and

take a lunch, at the same time scolded at Franzi, the lazy waitress, who was nowhere to be seen, and had left all the serving and work to him alone.

Even the rag-picker got up out of the corner into which he had crept, and went staggering toward the forest at a moderate distance behind the peasants.

Soon, with their long, vigorous strides, the men reached the newly-appointed place of meeting.

It was a small, sheltered valley, of the Upper Alps pasturage ground, shut in on both sides by dark gray rugged walls of rock, over which a steep foot-path led, only wide enough for one man to descend at a time. In the middle, a cleft in the rocks, bridged over only by two roughly-hewn trunks of trees, sank down deep—the channel of a mountain torrent, which in former times had washed out this chasm, but now had cut for itself another and deeper bed, into which the foaming rush of waters plunged with a dull, sullen roar. Where the valley widened slightly, the precipice had been, as it

were, hollowed out below, and above was overhanging; here, years before, a portion of the loosened rocks had fallen over, and were now lying scattered about in picturesque confusion. The smaller fragments were beautifully covered with reed grass and trailing blackberry bushes, while the larger rocks were so overlaid with thick, green, tufted moss, that they appeared like so many comfortable seats. Here and there a fir-tree of spontaneous growth, raised up its pointed top; and close to one side a beech-nut—borne, probably, by some bird to its nest—had found a cool and pleasant resting-place, and there sprang up, so that over the largest fragment of rock a green canopy of leaves spread out like a carefully stretched tent, while the gray stem of the tree offered itself as a comfortable support to the back. On the other side, this narrow cleft in the rocks opened to the view; and deep within it, confined as it were in a narrow gorge, the mountain torrent came leaping down the rocks from ledge to ledge. The bushes and green tree tops swayed up and down as if seeking

refreshment in the cool recess ; but above rose up a great mountain, with snow-capped summit, like the face of a true and far-seeing man, who, furrowed indeed and hardened by the realities of life, yet crowned with the silver wreath of calm wisdom, looked down, heeding and watchful, from his strange, lofty solitude.

This beautiful landscape was enlivened by a no less beautiful group. Upon the mossy top of the rock beneath the beech-tree, there was spread, as on a table, a snow-white cloth ; cups, tankards, and plates were arranged upon it, and showed that a deft and delicate hand understood how to unite the useful and the beautiful in the preparation of the afternoon coffee. On one side of the rock sat a young lady, in a fashionable and pretty dress, which would, indeed, have been more suitable in a ball room, than in this wild, woodland scene ; though the bunch of wild-flowers on the little hat, and the looping up of skirts, showed that the wearer had aimed to give to her elaborate toilet a rural air. She had opened a large portfolio upon her lap, and was now busy in sketching,

with practiced touches, the beautiful landscape before her; opposite to her sat a man in a fine, green hunting-suit, reclining gracefully and indolently against the stem of the beech-tree, and watching the smoke rings from a Havana cigar, which rose slowly in the motionless air, and were gradually dissipated. He appeared to listen attentively to the words of a respectful peasant standing near him, while he sometimes passed his delicate hand, richly adorned with rings, over his lofty and refined brow, or stroked his full and carefully-kept reddish whiskers.

"There, we have the devil now," said Grubhofer, when he, with his companions, first reached the top of the rocky path. "There stands Finkenzeller, the old fox, already at the Bailiff's side. And he talks and argues with him as if his life depended upon it. But this we must admit—his worship understands how to make himself comfortable, that waiting may not be irksome to him."

Thus conversing, they reached the valley, and respectfully approached the Bailiff with

uncovered heads. Finkenzeller retired to the other Westerbrunners, who were lying on the grass at a distance.

"Well, here we are now," said Grubhofer, who had been thrust forward. "We present our respects, your worship."

"Who are you?" inquired the official, with a careless side glance, while he quietly removed his cigar.

"We are the deputies of the Osterbrunn community, and are here in reference to our affair with the Westerbrunners, and on account—"

"Are you the overseer?" the Bailiff interrupted.

"No, the overseer is dead, and a new one is not yet chosen, and the warden has run a harrow-point into his foot, and is confined to bed; but we representatives are here together, and thought we could accomplish it without the overseer and warden."

"You have delayed a long time," said the Bailiff. "I am not accustomed to be kept waiting; it is your duty, as inferiors, to wait upon the office."

"But we have, indeed," the old man would have answered; but he could not finish the sentence, ere the Bailiff indignantly interrupted him.

"Keep quiet," said he; "I will hear no excuses! I have already learned by experience that among you Osterbrunners there is a want of order in the community, and in the government; but I will take care that this shall be otherwise. I will at once order an appointment to be made, and will see that you get an overseer who knows how to keep down your refractory heads."

The Osterbrunners stood in astonishment, regarding each other with puzzled faces, and twisting their hats about in their hands. Grubhofer seemed to wish to tear out his moustache; a flush spread over the face of the farmer of Oaks, and he was about to step forward to reply, when Grubhofer stepped before him.

"No true friend has told you that, worshipful Herr," said he. "In the Osterbrunn community things have always gone on in an

orderly and proper manner, and we challenge you to find any disorder among us. Your worship must not believe those who make this report to you, and indeed no Westerbrunner at all! We have already seen how Finkenzeller has talked to you; but if he said that, he lied. The Westerbrunners have a deadly hate against us; that I know from my father—”

“Because you Osterbrunners have always hated us, too,” exclaimed Finkenzeller, who hurriedly approached with the companions from his community, and placed himself opposite. “We have never done you any injury; that I know also from my father. We have always only defended ourselves against you.”

“Lied! who says that?” exclaimed Grubhofer, in reply. “The Westerbrunners began the whole quarrel, and have done us all the injury they could possibly think of. So it has been, I think, since—but you shall not get ahead of us. We also will defend ourselves, and there is no justice in the land, if we do not get our rights.”

The Bailiff took up his cup, and composedly sipped his coffee, that had meanwhile grown cool.

"What say you to that, *ma mie*?" said he to his wife, while he knocked the ashes from his cigar. "Guelphs and Ghibellines! in jackets; how does it seem to you?"

The lady answered nothing; she merely shrugged her somewhat bare shoulders, drew her pretty mouth into a disdainful smile, and went on with her sketching. The Bailiff drew from his vest pocket a tortoise-shell eye-glass, attached to his guard, put it to his eye and surveyed the peasants, who, scowling and ready for fight, stood opposite each other.

"I beg to be excused this clamor and rudeness," said he, sternly. "I see already where the fault lies. There is a want of that proper respect which makes you forget before whom you stand, and to whom you speak. I pledge myself to you for this, that in a year's time it shall be otherwise. And who are you?" continued he, turning to the schoolmaster, who

stood aside at a respectful distance. "Do you belong also to the Osterbrunners?"

"I am the schoolmaster of the place," answered the one addressed; "also the secretary of the community, and, as such, bound to make minutes of the daily business."

"Then I regret that you have had a profitless walk," responded the Bailiff. "The office which has charge of this business, has also to make the minutes. I have brought my secretary with me."

"Pardon me, Herr Bailiff," said Sixt, stepping forward, while the schoolmaster, abashed, retired, and the peasants, as before, looked at each other in a helpless way. "We did not intend to encroach upon the right of the office. It was done in good faith, for indeed it is not strictly business of the office in reference to which we are here, but an arbitration between two communities, at which the office is present. We wish also to save the community treasury the cost; and, moreover, this has always been the custom, and no one thinks or knows differently, that in the business of the community,

the community secretary should make the minutes."

The Bailiff, at the beginning of this speech, appeared disposed to spring up and answer angrily; but the quiet bearing and assured tone of Aicher had something about it which put a damper upon his increasing ill-humor. He restrained himself, measured from head to foot the vigorous figure of the young farmer, and asked coolly and in a repellant manner:

"Who is it that thrusts himself forward as spokesman and leader of the discussion?"

"I am Aicher of the Oaks," answered Sixt. "Herr Bailiff knows me already, perhaps not personally, yet you sent me a direction how to arrange the rotation of crops upon my property."

"Ah, is it thou? are you he?" exclaimed the official, correcting his form of expression. "You have refused to follow my advice, for it was only that which I sent you; you seem to be an obstinate fellow."

"I have indeed taken that liberty, Herr Bailiff," answered Sixt, "but I am not therefore

obstinate. I only mean, you would not allow yourself to be influenced by me in any respect if I came into your court and undertook to say how you should make up your minutes, and direct your proceedings; so likewise I will not allow myself to be influenced in any respect by you in regard to my farm and my fields. It may be judicious and profitable in the level country to rotate the crops, but with us here among the highlands, it is an entirely different matter; here imitation is useless, we must get our own experience."

"In reference to the dispute about the forest boundary, are you also the champion?"

"Not exactly that; but yet some one must take care of the matter, that others may be spared the labor, so I have undertaken it, and have brought here a plat, whereon all that is requisite is laid down."

With that he drew from his pocket a large map, folded together many times, and spread it out on the moss-covered rocks, pushing aside without hesitation the coffee cups. It was the appropriate map from among the general land

survey charts; and the forest, concerning which this business was, with its boundaries, its hills and valleys, its rocks and woodland, was shown so exactly, and with such great neatness, that the whole thing made an uncommonly handsome appearance.

"See there, a regular plat," said the Bailiff, in an indifferent tone. "Do you understand also how to draw? What say you to that, *ma mie*?—the second surprise in a half hour. A Quintin Matsys among the peasants."

The lady indeed, at the appearance of Aicher, had paused in her occupation to look at him, and now she cast a cursory glance upon the drawing, a rather creditable one for the artist.

"Not bad," said she, and turned again to her employment, without intimating to which of the two the observation had reference.

"I thought," Aicher began, "that such a plat would be very serviceable at the forest survey. We could then settle everything upon the very spot, note each objection, and thus arrive at some conclusion for the future, that should be no more disputed."

The official had now recovered from his surprise, and resumed his former tone.

"It is only to be regretted," said he, "that so much time, trouble, and industry should have been employed to no purpose. They would have been better employed in directing the rotation of crops; for, 'let every one stick to his last,' is a proverb which does not belong exclusively to the shoemaker. I have no further use for the plat. The boundary is already surveyed."

"But without our being present, Herr Bailiff," said Sixt, emphatically. "We were especially summoned to it, and it is not our fault if you suddenly appoint another place of meeting."

"Probably it will be of no more use; the office is already fully posted."

"You do not really mean that, Herr Bailiff," responded Sixt, whose already furrowed brow lowered still more. "There were two parties in the dispute about the boundaries. The survey was for the very purpose of hearing on the spot itself what each had to say. You have heard the recollections of one, you must also—"

The official flared up. "I must?" cried he. "Who dares to give me orders?"

"But, Herr Bailiff—"

"Herr Bailiff—and always Herr Bailiff!" continued the official, who seemed to be rapidly losing his composure. "I am the Baron von Lanzfelt. Aicher of Oak Farm would not lower himself by treating me with proper respect, and giving me the title which is my due."

"I did not know that I was ever wanting in proper respect," answered Sixt, and rubbed his forehead and curly head, as if to maintain his self-possession. "Moreover, I take nothing from your title, worshipful Sir; and certainly no disrespect is meant to the Baron von Lanzfelt, with whom I have nothing to do; but only with the Herr Bailiff, with whom I may speak because he has himself summoned me hither; and on that account I insist that the lines of the forest should be run; or if it be now too late for that, another day should be fixed! I certainly cannot understand—"

"And I cannot understand," said the offi-

cial, with a smile which showed that he thought he had found a way to make the proud farmer feel sensibly his superiority. "I cannot understand altogether how you undertake to interfere in this matter."

"I belong to the Osterbrunn community. The Oak Farm is one of the largest estates in the community. I am consequently one of those who have the greatest interest in the whole affair."

"That is of no importance in this matter," said the Baron, with a still more spiteful smile. "The size of your estate is not to be considered here. The members of the government of the community and the deputies alone are summoned hither. Do you belong to these?"

"No," stammered the farmer, painfully, while he again ran one hand through his hair, and with the other felt around him as if needing and seeking something by which to support himself. "I thought that I also had a right—"

"Thought!" replied the Bailiff, scornfully, "thought! As if it were merely a matter of

thought who were summoned hither! If it came to that, that fellow yonder would also have a right to be here; for, according to his thinking, he still continues to be the master of his property long ago sold."

Here he pointed to the edge of the woods, where the rag-picker lay under the shade of a hazel-tree on his rag-bag, sleeping away his drunkenness.

"What!" cried Sixt, clinching his fists, and drawing near to the speaker, threateningly, "you compare me with such a man—"

He could not finish, for the neighboring Osterbrunners had in a moment formed a ring around him and forced him aside, preventing an outburst which, under any circumstances, could only result in the injury of this man, so generally beloved.

Grubhofer, with some others, remained behind with the Bailiff.

"There will be no mistake in the end," said the old man, "though Aicher is not yet in the government of the community; there will certainly be a new election very soon, and it is

all the same as settled, that he, and no other, will be overseer ! ”

“ Ah ! ” said the Bailiff, without for a moment losing sight of the other group. “ Is that already so sure ? However, the office will do its duty, and inquire whether he possesses the necessary legal qualifications for this position. In the meanwhile, you will do well, good people, not yet awhile to trouble yourselves about the future ; but go your way quietly to your homes. You have, besides, a tolerably long way to go, and you will be notified of what is further to be done.”

The peasants spoke among themselves, and there was a good deal of grumbling—among the Osterbrunners, especially. Aicher had separated himself from them, and had stepped near the brook ; he caught up some water in the hollow of his hand, and bathed his forehead, to check the rush of blood to his head.

“ But,” Grubhofer said, at last, half aloud, “ we would still like to know how we stand. We certainly do not like to be brought here again and again, so entirely for nothing ! ”

"How is it now with the forest?" cried others. "We are quarreling now about the new forest boundary, and which of the two communities, then, has got the right?"

"Silence!" cried the Bailiff, with stern dignity. "I command peace, and I know how to make my orders obeyed. The business is laid before the office in due form, and will take its legal course. The explanations and recollections of the Westerbrunn community are reduced to writing, and will be compared with the opposite recollections of the Osterbrunn community. The office will then close the case, and after maturely deliberating on it, a decision will be given the most adapted to the good of both communities—"

"Then we will be in the same old place for fifty years!" cried the Osterbrunners, indignantly, to each other. And among the Westerbrunners were many to whom the sentence, although it was somewhat in their favor, seemed hard on account of the delay.

"We do not want any long writings!" cried they, with increasing noise. "We do not wish

it to be put off indefinitely! We are all here together now! It should be settled at once."

"Oh! ho!" cried one of the Westerbrunners, to one of those belonging to the hostile community, standing opposite to him, "Couldn't you wait till the award comes? That is because you have a bad conscience and a bad case!"

"And you shouldn't open your jaws, you hungry Westerbrunn wretches!" cried Grubhofer, on the other side. "You should be ashamed of yourselves to want the case so hurried up, to take us by surprise!"

"Who talks that way to us?" was retorted from the other side. "He is a scoundrel who says so!"

"I say it. Old Grubhofer says it. But whoever insults me by calling me a scoundrel, is not worthy of being above ground!"

The Bailiff repeatedly commanded peace and silence; but his voice possessed neither the strength to drown the growing noise, nor had his word the power to place a barrier between the hostile peasants, who, with increasing

anger, brawling and shouting, continued to press nearer each other, so that at any moment a hand to hand combat was to be expected.

Then all at once Aicher stepped between them ; struck back, right and left, with his powerful arms, the most violent and forward, and had soon made a free space, in the midst of which he stood opposite the Bailiff, who had withdrawn himself from the *mêlée* to a discreet distance. He was again as cool as on his arrival in the valley of the forest, only the blood which had at first flushed his face, seemed to have receded from it to the last drop.

“What is the matter, Grubhofer, you old rebel?” cried he. “Will you never learn to keep peace? And you, Finkenzeller. I thought you too prudent a man to be so old a brawler, and an overseer of the community, too! What do you want, then? Is it not yet enough for you that you have a law-suit at your door, of which the one-half certainly will not live to see the end, and by which, in the meanwhile, the other half may be ruined? Do

you still wish to have an inquiry into the matter and at the same time give each other bloody heads? Do you wish to prove that those are right who say that we can never control ourselves nor live in harmony, that we should have a guardian placed over us everywhere, and should have freedom dealt out to us, as meat to children, in small, delicate pieces, so that they are not choked? I cannot believe it of you, neighbors! Our ancestors in the two villages used to meet each other in peace and harmony, but for the last thirty years there has been nothing but discord and hostility—”

“Quite naturally,” answered Finkenzeller. “It is just so long as you Osterbrunners have been trying to get the Staudinger Forest from us.”

“Because we cannot do without the leaf litter,” said Sixt, “and because the Staudinger Forest rightfully and naturally belongs to us! And I can just as well say that you began the quarrel, because you hanker after the Achazi Point, and think it belongs to you!”

“And it does belong to us,” cried Finkenzeller again, “and it must belong to us. It is the pasturage that we must use, if we would not be ruined. And we can also prove that it is ours. We had old writings for it and letters patent, with a great seal attached, but we had them entered in the office twenty years ago.”

“Yes,” began he of Oak Farm again, “so was it with our private deeds too, but the Record Office was burned down, and all the old records and documents were consumed. Nobody can say now how it once was. Must we be fools, and on this account squander our good money in law-suits? Would it not be more judicious that we should forget the past, begin anew, and fix it for the future?”

“Yes, yes,” cried many voices, and a murmur of assent went through both the hostile factions. The Bailiff alone shrugged his shoulders contemptuously and laughed.

“Yes, as if that could be easily done! Besides, this is no fit place for that kind of thing!”

"It certainly does not depend on the place, Herr Baron von Lanzfelt; and if one is only in earnest, many a thing succeeds that does not at first look like it. Come together here, neighbors and friends, and look at this plat I have drawn. If it is good for nothing else, it will still be useful in letting you see how the lines run where the boundaries of our communities conflict. Even at the time when the land was marked and bounded, no one rightly knew how the boundaries lay. The surveyor therefore made quick work of it, took his ruler and drew a line clear through the middle. To the right of the line lies the Staudinger Forest, which you hope to get; to the left, further down, is the Achazi Point, which we Osterbrunners would very much like to have. Now, just look here! That green line which winds so curiously there, is the Grünach brook. How would it do if we were to throw aside the surveyor with all his lines, and take instead the boundaries which our dear Lord God himself has drawn on the land? The Grünach makes a bend there, and goes around

the forest here and there ; further down it runs off to the left, and leaves the point. Do you let us have so much of the point as falls on this side of the brook, and we will give up the strip of forest that the brook cuts off. In this way we will both of us get what we want. We will thus have an accurate boundary line that needs no marking, and about which there can be no dispute in the future. We will have no more law-suits at our doors ; and what is best of all, the feud will be over, and the Osterbrunners and Westerbrunners can again be good neighbors and friends as they once were."

The farmer had "hit the nail on the head." It needed only a few moments, during which the men were looking at the plat on the rock, to make all of one mind ; the proposition was so simple and clear, and satisfied both sides so thoroughly, that it seemed incomprehensible that no one had struck on this means of settlement long ago. Their approval expressed itself in loud shouts, which announced unanimous assent.

The peasants and farmers pressed around

Sixt to offer him their hand; and Finkenzeller, the overseer of Westerbrunn, was very much affected as he came up to him.

"Go to, Sixt," said he, "you're a good fellow! You are the worthy son of a worthy sire! God bless you! Come here, I must give you a kiss!"

Whereupon he seized him with both hands around the head, and impressed a couple of hearty kisses on his mouth and cheek.

"And it shall be as you have said!" cried he, again. The Grünach shall be the boundary line from this time henceforth! Whoever don't think it right, has got to do with me. All he has to do is to say so, and I'll make it right."

In the general joy, no one had taken any notice of the Bailiff, who, having angrily stepped aside, was now helping his wife to put up the tea things. Completely out of patience, she had long before closed up her sketch-book. Although the Bailiff shook with internal rage, yet he possessed sufficient worldly wisdom and self-control to conceal it; he felt

that he might make himself liable to something disagreeable, and that he must change somewhat his tone and demeanor, to repair the consequence of the occurrence, which had very sensibly wounded his official dignity. The servant, by the announcement that the carriage was ready for the homeward journey, afforded a welcome opportunity to veer round and smooth over what was unpleasant.

"My dear people," said he, stepping toward them with obsequious bows and sour-sweet smiles, "business calls me away now ; consider well the proposition of this young man. I will be very glad, I am sure, if it may become the basis of an amicable arrangement. The office will make its report accordingly, and will not stand on a point of strict jurisdiction for the sake of approving such a settlement of the dispute."

"Certainly, Baron von Lanzfelt," returned Sixt. "And if, contrary to expectation, a little stone should be found in the way, there is one gentleman who goes beyond a point of jurisdiction, and at whose door we surely do not knock in vain."

"Very well, all right!" murmured the Bailiff, between his teeth, and then continued, offering his arm to his wife and turning toward her. "It was certainly a pleasant, amusing company. It gave various opportunities for the study of the country and people. Is that not so, ma mie? This young farmer is a bit of a tribune of the people, a country Graccus or Rienzi. What do you say to that, ma mie?"

The lady made a repellant movement with her finely-worked cambric handkerchief, as if she wished to fan away bad air from her.

"*Fi donc*," said she. "The tribune of the people smells of the cow stable."

The twilight began, autumnally fresh and cool; behind the fir-trees a pale golden evening light shone in the dusky vaporous sky, which led one to conjecture that the morning would find the fields covered with the forerunner of winter—with white glittering hoarfrost. It was no longer well to remain out in the open air; for this reason it was very quiet and lonely all around the inn at the

cross-roads ; but the bright shining windows of the ground story scattered their ruddy light far out into the dusk, and announced that quite a number of the peasants had yielded to the invitation of the host, and had made a halt at the hospitable house. It was certainly well to make much of the day of the unexpected treaty of peace between the two communities, and to duly celebrate it behind the beer tankard, and to assure its continuance with the Westerbrunners ; some of whom, in the first joy of reconciliation, had not avoided the roundabout way, and with their regained neighbors had returned to the beer-house.

In the dusky gable of the house was a single small window, dimly lighted. It was the little room into which Franzi had led the sick Susi, and where she had shut herself up with her. In vain had the landlord come many times to her door, called her, and requested her to wait on the guests. Franzi did not open the door, but only called out that the landlord should manage for to-day only, as well as he could alone ; she could not leave the sick lady :

by herself, because she urgently needed her care. The host lumbered down the steps in a rage, but he did not dare to insist on his rights and to order her, on account of the guest, who was running up a very proper reckoning; and as the young lady was his sister, he was obliged to wink at the matter.

The forester and Meister Staudinger had feasted and drank the whole afternoon; they had talked so very confidentially and fervently together, had so often shaken hands cordially, and clinked their glasses, that it was evident they had found in each other an unusual similarity of ideas. The stout butcher became uncommonly talkative, and never wearied, though with an ever-increasing thickness of utterance, of relating the tricks and artifices through which he succeeded in making many a profitable purchase and many a fat bargain.

"You see, my brother," hiccoughed he, "one must act in this way if he would come across the green bough! Drink to this,—one must be cunning!"

"That's so," laughed the forester, clinking

glasses; "for does it not stand even so in Holy Writ, that one must be harmless as a dove, but wise as a serpent. I agree to the whole plan perfectly. There is always something to be made in the wood and cattle trade, but two must stand by each other without others having a suspicion of it, and then it is all right, and the one drives the bullfinch to the net for the other. But I must go now. I must see about my sister, the whimpering thing."

The butcher looked at him slyly, with a watchful side-glance. "Is Susi right sick, the poor creature?" said he, with a forced, spiteful laugh. "One can well imagine why you take so much care of her; she certainly can't live long, and he who has taken care of her, will, without doubt, get the rich inheritance! It is a very sweet morsel, and if what the aunt has got is added to it, she will have a beautiful little pile!"

"Faugh!" interrupted the forester, with a sanctimonious air. "What do you think of me? Who would have such unchristian

thoughts of his own sister ? If I had, I would be in fear of deadly sin indeed ! ”

“ Oh ! of course ! ” answered the butcher ; “ but who could resist, if it seems so much as if it were the will of heaven ? ”

“ That would certainly be another affair,” replied the forester, folding his hands, “ to which one should submit like a good Christian—but I really cannot stay here any longer, I must stir myself and hurry our departure. I do not wish to meet my brother again, and he certainly will come back. He is too grave for me.”

“ And for me too much of a fine gentleman, though he is only a farmer,” said Master Staudinger to himself, while the forester hastily left the apartment.

Then the butcher seized his glass, emptied it at a draught, and staring, without thought, before him, folded his hands over his rotund stomach. After a few moments, his heavy eye-lids drooped ; and with head bent forward, he sank into a deep, snoring sleep. He did not hear the Bailiff when he stopped at the

door, on his journey, and repaired to the room prepared for him on the other side of the house, to partake of the evening meal ordered by him. Nor was he aware of the entrance of the host, who removed both the candlesticks with the wax candles from the table, and exchanged them for miserable tallow ones. The carouse was over ; therefore, there was also an end to the attention ; the old guest was forgotten for the new one, the inferior for the superior.

In the meanwhile the forester had reached the dusky corridor of the upper story, into which only a feeble light was thrown up the steps. A bright streak on the floor, however, which shone through the badly-fitting door, betrayed the chamber where the girls had shut themselves up. With soft, cat-like tread he crept nearer, feeling his way by the wall, till he had found the door landing. Then he bent down and listened at the key-hole ; through a knot-hole, he was able, by stretching himself somewhat uneasily, to observe everything in the room dimly lighted by a single oil lamp. Susi sat on

the low bed, and had bent over Franzi, who was kneeling before her. Her head rested on Franzi's shoulder, and her face was concealed in the loosened ringlets of her luxuriant black hair. Both were motionless. Susi slumbered, apparently, and Franzi held herself fixed in her uncomfortable position, in order not to awaken the sufferer, who seemed to be already very much improved by her short repose.

"What is the matter with them, the sentimental fools!" thought the eaves-dropper, while his glance at the same time hung eagerly on the face of Franzi, on which the light of the lamp was fully thrown, and on her blooming white neck, without its usual covering, exposed by her kneeling posture.

After a short time, Susi lifted her head, smoothed her brow as if reflecting, and then looked Franzi in the face, with a smile full of infinite love and trust. She was about to speak, when the forester, in his eager effort not to lose a word of the discourse, groping along the threshold, made a noise which, slight as it was, did not escape Franzi's attention. In a

moment, she arose, stepped to the door, and had opened it before the forester found time to withdraw. Confused, he stood before her, and answered stammeringly to the question of what he wanted, "that it was high time to depart again ; he had wished to see if his sister was not ready yet."

"I am coming," said Susi, fixing the braids of her hair ; "you go on, brother. In a few minutes I will be ready for the journey."

He still appeared to linger, perhaps with the purpose to learn something of the affairs of the two girls. But Franzi did not budge from the threshold, and cried, pointing to the steps, "What are you waiting for, Herr Aicher? What we have to say, you must already know, and there is no use in listening."

Angry, and without reply, he rushed away. But Susi drew her friend to her, and sank upon her bosom.

"I must leave you," she whispered, "but my heart remains behind with you. How fortunate I am that the Lord has led me to you. Is it not true, Franzi, that you will never desert me?"

"Never—as long as I live!"

"And what we have spoken, will it not remain a secret between us?"

"Till I lie in my grave. And what I have promised you, that I will keep, too—you may rely on that."

"Oh, Franz! if you could make that possible, then all would be well. Then I would be as happy as an angel in heaven."

"Rely on it, Susi. You know I lost my mother early, when I was still quite a little girl—so early that I have never been able exactly to imagine how she looked; only often in sleep, in a dream, I see her before me; as if bending her dear, good, familiar face over me. And yet, my mother is the most sacred, the dearest thing to me in the world. I cannot therefore promise you by anything more sacred; but as certainly as I love my dear, good mother, I will keep it, and accomplish what I have promised you. Collect yourself," she continued, as Susi, bursting into tears, threw her arms about her neck. "I hear the carriage already driving up. No one must see

that you have been weeping. You must show a good spirit, or we will only make the matter worse for ourselves."

Assuringly, quietly, and firmly, she seized her friend's hand, and conducted her down to the carriage, which was standing ready. Not a word more passed between them. They looked each other again in the eyes, pressed each other's hands, and the team rattled away to disappear in a few moments in the darkness.

For a time Franzi remained standing, listening to the noise of the carriage as it died away, and looked up at the sickle moon, which shone like silver over the tops of the firs, and cast them into still darker relief. The events of the day passed through her mind, until a noise in the bushes startled her. In the uncertain moonlight, she thought she saw a figure glide away from them.

"Who is there?" she cried, resolutely advancing. But everything remained quiet and motionless; a couple of boughs only swayed against each other. "It must have been a night bird which I had aroused," she

said, and walked toward the house. "Of such things I am not afraid."

In the hall the host met her, and scolding angrily, said: "Is this the proper conduct for a waitress? My wife cannot go a step from the kitchen, all the rooms are full of guests, and you leave me to conduct the house alone, and set yourself down, there in the upper story, doing nothing but amusing yourself."

Franzi took from the scolding man the plates and tankards which he was carrying, and said, composedly: "I cannot give the landlord satisfaction; but I cannot do otherwise, so it will be best for us to part. You must look for a better girl in a fortnight, as I am going to leave."

Confused, the landlord looked after her as she disappeared down the cellar steps. This result was unexpected to him, and also unwished for; for in spite of all his scolding, he was obliged to confess to himself, that he would have to search far before he could find another servant of like usefulness and honesty.

"What is this now again," he grunted; "you

. . .

can't say a word, but you get the straw sack before your own door. The devil shows himself by his cloven foot."

Franzi had in the meantime began to arrange what had been neglected in the different rooms; she served and removed, and soon it was not to be mistaken what a clever, skillful hand can do in a short time. In the room in which Meister Staudinger was still leaning back asleep, it had become dark; the tallow candle flared up expiringly; but through the window panes the moonlight was pouring in, so that they glittered and cast their reflection on the floor. As soundly asleep as was the meister he did not appear to be tranquil, for he often moved heavily, as if lying under a burden which he was unable to remove, and unintelligible words streamed from his feverish lips. Franzi took the burnt-out candle away, to replace it with a new one; but either by the movement, or from the brighter light, the sleeper awoke. His first glance fell upon the girl. He made a motion as if to start up in terror, but he was unable, and fell heavily back

to his first position ; but his eyes stood wide open, and hung with a fixed expression of fear upon Franzi, while his mouth endeavored in vain for a long time to utter a word.

"Away! away with you?" he exclaimed at last, with an effort. "I cannot bear that face. Take your face away. I cannot bear it. I will know nothing of it! Your eyes pierce me. They pierce me through and through."

Astonished, Franzi lifted the candle high up, and cast its light steadily into his face; his confused, dreamy condition was thereby dissipated, and he looked at the girl with a contemptuous expression in which his old rancor burst freely forth.

"What are you doing here? What do you want?" he said, angrily. "Is this your style, to terrify people in their sleep?"

"I believe you are still dreaming," she answered, firmly enduring his gaze. "I have not frightened you, Sir. But if you are thus terrified by a quiet person and a simple light, you must account for it to yourself, not to me."

She stepped to the window, as was usual at night, to close the shutters. To the meister it had become uncomfortable. He went to the large room, where there was still company.

"What could it have been?" he murmured to himself, while a shiver ran down his back. "I could have sworn I was wide awake, and saw her as clearly before me as if it had been broad daylight."

On the point of closing the window, Franzl stopped.

"That thing has glided by again," she whispered. "What can it mean?" She paused, and held her breath, for the moon, which just began to break out of a dark cloud, disclosed the figures of two men, who, clad in dark clothes, concealing their faces under large hats, crouched down at the wall and began to whisper to each other.

"He is not within," said one. "I could overlook the whole room from the window."

"And have you looked carefully, too?" asked the other. "Perhaps you did not see him, or did not know him."

"Tell me how to know the farmer of the Oaks! he is not in the house, you can swear to it. But he must come yet, and he shall not escape us. Look there!" he said and pointed to the entrance. "Who is coming there?"

"It is he; that is our man; quick, that we do not miss him."

The men disappeared.

Franzi's knees almost gave way at what she had heard; but the paroxysm quickly left her. It was clear to her that something extraordinary was impending over Sixt, the friend of her youth—that a great danger was perhaps threatening him. She could not remain idle and look on; and although he had left her in great dissatisfaction, she must warn him—must, if that were no longer possible, at least be near to work for him—to help him if she could. With quick steps she hurried through the large room over the hall, down to the entrance, but—she came too late. The farmer of the Oaks had already met the two disguised men, and was engaged in a conversation apparently important, but also free from danger.

"Let us go somewhat aside," said Sixt, "so that no one surprises us."

The men approached nearer to the house, and there was nothing left for Franzi, if she did not wish to be seen, but to cower down behind the steps in the corner. Low as was the voice in which the conversation was conducted, not a word could escape her.

"It is not otherwise," said one of them, "and you must see how it concerns you. You know old Grundner is dead."

"I have heard of it," answered Aicher.

"You know, also, he was Habermeister, and that the Habermeister has the right to appoint the one who is to succeed him, who must be Habermeister."

"That I know, indeed, but what have I to do with it?"

"Don't be at cross-purposes. Are you not a Haberer as well as we, and pretend not to understand us? Old Grundner sent us to you."

"To me! I must—"

"You, and no other man must now be the

Habermeister. When he was on the point of death, old Grundner caused us two and the four other ancients to be called, who constitute the Haber court, and told us that he knew of no better and more proper man to succeed him than Aicher—Sixt of the Oaks. We were obliged to promise him, grasping his dying hand, that we would go to you and make the announcement to you; and when we had done that, he became calm, laid himself back, and soon after died; and we have now sought you out."

"No, no!" cried Sixt, waving them off. "I am not fit for it. I am much too young for it."

"That is immaterial," said the Haberer. "The Meister has the right to choose his successor, and nobody else. He has chosen you; you are therefore the Habermeister; and no man can say a word against it, if you consider it rightly. Don't make such a ceremony about it, Aicher. The oat-fields are cleared away everywhere; the wind is already blowing over the stubble from Leizach to Mang-

fall. It is time to call a meeting. Say Yes, then, and accept the staff."

"What staff?"

"How you speak and act. What other than that which the Habermmeister bears, and is the sign of his office as long as the Haber court exists? The Emperor Karl himself gave it to the first Habermmeister, and it has, since that time, sacredly descended from hand to hand."

The man drew the staff from beneath his mantle, and offered it to the farmer of the Oaks, who refused it with a gesture of fear. It was an unpolished staff of old, dark-brown wood, thin and long, not unlike a scepter; the handle was carved in the shape of a globe; at the upper end was fixed a hand, with an up-lifted forefinger, as if in the act of swearing.

"Leave me in peace now," said Sixt, anxiously. "It comes upon me as if falling from heaven. I must first consider."

"Consider whether you will accept the greatest honor that can befall you in your whole life? Are you a Haberer, and will

you consider whether you will protect the old custom, the old right of which we are proud, and which we alone have in our district?"

Approaching steps and voices were audible.

"Somebody is coming," whispered Sixt. "Conceal yourselves; but remain in the neighborhood. I will give you an answer."

The Haberers disappeared in the darkness. Sixt turned to the steps, as if he was about to ascend them. Franzl stood before him. She was much moved and excited. She was unable to speak, and lifted up her clasped hands to him, as if entreating.

"You here? Where did you come from?" cried he angrily to her. "You seem to be always listening."

"God is my witness," she answered, hastily, "I did not wish to listen. I cannot deny that I have heard the conversation. But I believe my guardian angel has led me here at this moment."

"What do you want of me? Go out of my sight, you eaves-dropper. I don't wish to

know any of your secrets. Why do you thrust yourself on me ? ”

“Thrust myself? I thrust myself on you? I want only to say a single word—a single prayer. Don’t let yourself be persuaded, Sixt. Don’t do what they ask of you.”

“And why not? Is it anything wrong?”

“God pardon me if I do not comprehend it, but I cannot help myself. Yes, I think it wrong for any one to make himself judge over others. We are all weak mortals! Do not let yourself be misled by vanity, Sixt. I have already told you to-day what I think of the Haberfeld.”

“And you can also know what I think of it. My opinions are worth as much as yours; why should I yield to you?”

“Because I have a foreboding that it leads to no good end,” cried Franzi, with a voice of still increasing urgency.

“Do not defy the Lord; leave judgment and punishment to him; don’t do it, Sixt, it will be your ruin.”

“And if it were, what business is it of

yours? How does it concern you? I am a stranger to you in every respect."

"You should not say that," said she, so fervently, that you could hear how the tone came from her very heart. "You should not even think it; if you do not wish to know anything more of me, still I can never forget that I found a home at the Oak Farm, and a father, and a mother, and"—she hesitated a little—"a brother, who has been always good to me."

"And prove it to me," cried the farmer of the Oaks, also warming up. "Prove that all this is not merely an empty speech. You entreat of me; I have also entreated you. I will do what you desire, but you must also grant my request."

"What request?" said she, uncertainly.

"Have you forgotten it already? That you should return again to the Oak Farm, and to me."

He had, without knowing himself how it had happened, seized her hand. She trembled before his unexpected emotion, as well as at the words he had spoken.

"Well," said he, sternly, "is that something so dreadful? It really alarms you!"

She collected herself, and forced herself to speak.

"Back to the Oak Farm? No! no! that I cannot do."

"Cannot," cried the farmer, kindling with wrath. "Say at least why; you must tell me! I must know what there is at my farm which you avoid, as if the Oak Farm was a robber's den, or some unrighteous house."

"Ask not," stammered the girl, and sought to free herself from the hand which held her even more tightly. "And if you ask me till the day of judgment, I cannot!"

"And if I must hold you till the day of judgment, I must,—I will know it now."

He threw his arm about the girl, who was anxiously trying to free herself. At that moment the door of the side room opened, in which the Bailiff had been taking his supper. A bright light fell into the vestibule and shone upon the pair, who, to those coming out, might well have the appearance of being star-

tled out of an embrace. It was the noble Bailiff, who, accompanied respectfully by the landlord, his spouse on his arm, was about to go to his carriage.

"Look there," said he, with triumphant disdain, "our young draughtsman and demagogue of this morning. I am sorry to have disturbed you. Aicher of the Oaks need not be ashamed of his taste. What do you say to it, *ma mie*? Will not the pretty waiter-girl make a handsome farmer's wife?"

"That is not so, Herr Baron!" cried Sixt, struggling with wrath and shame. "Franzi is my foster-sister, and has grown up with me. What we two have had to transact with each other is something quite different; and this at all events is certain, that a waiter-girl will never be wife at the Oak Farm."

The Bailiff did not appear to hear the reply; with a proud nod of the head he had already passed by and gone out of the house.

Franzi stood aside as if stunned. Sixt, too, had difficulty in keeping his composure. His blood rushed, as if boiling, to his brain, at the

thought of how he had appeared to the man who had mortified him so much. He appeared undecided what to do, or to say, when one of the disguised men looked cautiously in at the door.

“Come in!” cried he to him, suddenly recovering himself, and seizing Franzi’s arm again. “I have to thank you for that,” he said, between his teeth. “And I am to do what you desire of me! Shall I protect and support you in your hidden course? No, I will put an end to mystery whenever I can. I will not permit injustice if I see it; and will not rest until I have brought it to daylight to receive its judgment and punishment. Come in, ye ancients—give me the staff. I have considered. I will be Habermeister.”

CHAPTER III.

It had already become deep twilight. Out of the dark recess of the mountain, where the mill-at-the-tree hung over the roaring Mang-fall, the light of the hearth-fire already cast its illumination down the road which descended on both sides in a steep declivity. At the door stood the miller, who looked up with experienced and apprehensive glances at the dark, driving clouds; beside him, his rag-bag thrown over his back, and a small glass of cherry-brandy in his hand, which the hospitable miller had regaled him with, stood the rag-picker, ready to continue his wanderings.

“Be prudent, Alisi, and remain where you are. The wind blows so cuttingly cold that I should not be at all surprised if it began to snow. I should be sorry for you to run about in the storm; can you not stretch yourself out in the stable? To-day you will get no more

rags, and wont get a welcome wherever you go."

The rag-picker sipped away, with his head thrown back, that not a drop of the precious liquor should remain in the glass. His face was strongly flushed by excitement, and perhaps because he had already emptied the little glass several times. He had almost the appearance of being unable to stand on his legs.

"I am not going to sleep in the stable," said he, hiccougging. "The stable belongs to the beasts; Aicher has said it; but I will soon remind him, and will show him, that I too have a home and a bed, although I am not a rich farmer. It is not necessary for me to sleep in the stable, miller. Up over the mountain there, a short hour, and I am at home."

"What? don't be foolish, Alisi," said the good-hearted miller, and seized him by the arm to draw him into the house. "Come in, the storm is getting worse and worse; flakes of snow are already falling, and I must close the house door. Come in, I say! Will you never learn that your home is sold, and belongs to

you no longer? Will you go there again to be cast out by him who now lives there, as you were the last time?"

"Who can take from me what is mine?" cried the rag-picker, tearing himself loose. "I will show the scoundrel—I will show all of them that they can't take my property from me! I will turn the tables on him; I will drive him out of my home. We are just now getting into the cold weather, when you can bear a good heating."

"Well, if you will have it so, you can go," answered the miller. He stepped into the house and locked the door. "He is, and always will be, a ragamuffin," he continued, speaking to himself, "but it almost seems as if he were a little cracked. They ought not to allow him to go about alone; some mischief will happen yet."

Alisi stood for a time, after the manner of such people, before the house, and cried and beat at the closed door; then he went staggering up the steep ascent of the road. The miller was not far wrong as to his condition.

The rag-picker knew generally well enough what he said and did, but a single word sufficed to excite in him thoughts and conceits, which would master him entirely, and take away from him the ability to think clearly and act quietly. The thought of the disgrace which had fallen upon him, the recollection of the loss of his property, never left him, and constantly strengthened the bitterness and exasperation of his temper. He had no other way of freeing himself from this tormenting condition, than by entire stupefaction through strong and frequent drams; but in the last few days, even these no longer produced the desired effect; the influence of the brandy did not last as long as formerly. His blunted nature seemed to have become accustomed to it.

That was the more so to-day, because the icy wind, the higher the rag-picker went up the mountain, whistled around him so much the more furiously, and cast the wet, chilling snow into his face.

"I am almost frozen," he said, whimpering, to himself, and he sought to warm his

red and stiffening hands by beating them against his body. "You would not drive a dog out in such weather. Why must I be out? Am I worse than a dog? And I am innocent! I have never injured a child. They have lied! I did not set fire to the house. I am not guilty of almost burning up my grandfather in the fire. They cannot take my property from me, and they must give it back to me, and my good name too. And when I have it," he continued, after a while, more gently, and with a feeling of pleasure, "then I will rake and scrape until I too am rich. The richest of them all I must become, and then I will remind them of it—all of them who have ordered me like a beast to the stable, and who drive me out in the tempest like a dog! Then they must become poor and wretched, and must come to Alisi—they must come to the house of the worthless Alisi, and must beg. Ha! ha! ha! I will enjoy that, and will drive them out; the Haberers and the insolent peasants, and the Aicher Sixt, as thanks for the kick he gave me. And she, the proud.

wench, who showed fear and horror at me, as if I were a toad or a poisonous reptile."

During this soliloquy he had reached the last slope, and stepped into the side path turning off from the road, which led to a few scattered farms. Far back of these, perhaps an hour's distance toward the forest, lay the property which had once been his own.

The tempest still grew worse; the wind rushed savagely through a ravine and whirled the snow-flakes more thickly, so that it was impossible to see a step before you. Much snow had already fallen; it commenced to lie on the grass and cover the foliage of the trees with its white mantle. A gust of wind more furious than the rest struck him, tore his hat from his head and whirled it down the mountain.

"Oh! ho!" he cried, and uttered a shrill laugh. "Fly away, you old hat! you are of no account. Now the wind can harm me no longer. It can't take away the little hair on my head. If I only get into my house again, I will laugh at this. Then I will take off my

wet jacket, and seat myself near the warm stove, and dry myself; and my wife fetches me supper, and gives me my little boy to play with. Oh! ho! my little Alisi, what a fine fellow you are."

From a distance a low whimpering was audible through the tempest; the rag-picker stood still and listened.

"But this is nonsense," he said; "it seems to me just now as if I had heard a voice. I know not how it is, but I often think my head is not quite right. But it must have been the wind which soughs and whistles so violently through the trees."

He went a step further and stopped again; his illusion and intoxication gradually left him altogether. There could be no mistake, he heard the whimpering again, nearer and more distinctly than before.

"That cannot be the wind," continued the rag-picker, "but it is the voice of a living child. There is no farm or house within half-an-hour's distance. There must surely be something wrong going on. It is now quite

dark, but I think there is something moving yonder, in the hedge fence."

He stooped down with the craftiness of an animal, close to the trunk of a tree, and looked with whetted curiosity in the direction of the hedge. He perceived plainly that the branches moved; that they were carefully separated from each other, and that the head and then the upper part of a body came slowly and cautiously out of the bushes.

It was the form of a woman—her clothes well tucked up. Her head and shoulders were concealed in a cloak, which was drawn up high, and a large wrapper muffled her still further. The figure advanced softly and carefully. She appeared to carry something wrapped up in the shawl in her arms.

"What can that mean?" said the rag-picker to himself. "There is no path at all from that direction. Where can the girl be going, and what is it she has hidden in her shawl?"

The whimpering still struck his listening ear.

"It must certainly come from there," said

he. "It is the voice of a child. The wench has a crying child on her arm. Where can she be going with it in this murderous weather? Something wrong is going on. I must know who she is."

He glided quietly and crouchingly along the hedge fence, in a direction where the woman, coming across the snowy slope of the hill, must meet him. All at once she appeared to become aware of the listener. She turned about with a half-suppressed cry of surprise, and glided with quickened steps in the opposite direction.

"Stop!" cried the rag-picker. "You don't escape me so! And now it strikes me, all at once—the gait, the voice, the whole figure. I ought certainly to know this person. It is indeed—well, I will catch you and look into your face."

With this he threw off his bag, and ran at the top of his speed after the woman, who at the same time appeared to make every exertion to outrun him by increasing her speed.

But the burden on her arm was a great im-

pediment, and compelled her frequently, for the sake of security, to go slowly for a moment, or take a round-about way because it was more sure. The distance continually shortened between her and the pursuer; already he was so near that she thought she felt the panting of his breath, and his hand upon her neck, when her pursuer in his haste made a misstep, slid along the slippery ground covered with wet snow, and, unable to stay himself on anything, rolled cursing a considerable way down the hill.

When he had picked himself up again below, the fleeing woman, who knew well how to turn to her advantage the darkness of the night and the start which she had gained, had disappeared; and in spite of the most diligent listening and search, he could discover neither a trace nor a sound.

"It is all the same," cried the rag-picker, and raised his fists, threateningly, "you shall not escape me. I must know what this means, and who you are! But how get at it? I will return to the mill, will creep into the stable,

and early to-morrow morning I will seek out the foot-prints and follow them! But no, that wont do; by to-morrow, everything will be snowed over, or it will be warm weather and it will melt. How would it be if I were to go on? I am, indeed, almost exhausted; it will require a full hour to get there; but she, too, has no shorter distance. Yes, I will go—will see whether she is at home, and if not, then rejoice Alisi—then rejoice Alisi, for you have her in your power, for then it can be no other person.”

He concealed his rag-bag as well as he could under a thick, overhanging hazel bush, and then disappeared in the darkness, as if it were himself who had to flee.

The interior of a neighboring farm-house offered a complete picture of peace and comfort. Whoever had seen it, would not have imagined how soon care and anxiety were coming to it. In vain the storm rattled at the shutters, which were so firmly fastened that

scarcely a ray of light shone through the crevices. The secure house, surrounded by a few large linden trees, forbade entrance to the blast. Only toward the rear, where there was an ascent to the barn and threshing-floor, formed of beams, like a bridge, a creaking noise could be heard at times, as if the barn-door was not securely bolted, or as if a board, gradually loosened by the frequent gusts of wind, was shaking.

It was the Manor Farm, the magnificent estate of Susi's old aunt, who had called her sister's child to her, in her last days, which she felt to be approaching, in order not to be entirely alone, and not to be left to the care of strangers. The girl had arrived a few days before, accompanied by her brother, the forester; but he, not feeling comfortable, had soon left. Her old aunt had received the girl with the overflowing love and joy, with which one welcomes the realization of a long-cherished wish. She was so exclusively occupied with Susi, and thought for her only, that he soon felt the hope of stealing a piece of the rich inheritance

by civility or flattery, to be a deceitful one; he therefore quickly gave up the attempt, as his aunt treated him just as coldly and repellantly as she showered upon the girl proofs of her affection. On this account he quickly determined to alter his plan, and he turned all his amiability on his sister, that she, whose end could not possibly be far off, on account of her constant and serious illness, might show a preference for that brother who had in her lifetime always shown so great a preference for her.

In the sitting room, which as usual formed the corner in the basement of the house, it was very comfortable; for the large, dark-tiled stove had been heated for the first time after its summer's repose, and rays from the fire played on the floor here and there, out of the half-shut door, as if they would vie with the hanging oil-lamp which, contrary to the usual custom of the land, was hung over the table in the corner. The mistress of the house had introduced this novelty when petroleum began to come into general use. Because her eyes

were weak, and it was pleasant to have the light above instead of in front of her. For the same reason the light was turned down as far as possible, and spread around only a mild twilight, enough to disclose the outlines of the room, the dark rafters, the paneling of the ceiling, and the cornice running round the walls. Over the table there was a little altar formed of gayly-colored tiles, old bunches of artificial flowers, and a crucifix; near by, in the broad recess of the window, there lay under the hanging calendar the few books which the small reading of the mistress of the house required. An old large-lettered Bible with wood-cuts, a Missal, the History of Isidore, the Stout Peasant of Reid, the Legend of the Beautiful Magellone, a Princess of Brittany, and of the Four Children of Haman. Upon the stone-bench there lay a smooth pillow, as a couch for the farmer when he returned home from his work, wet and cold, and wished to dry and warm himself at the large stove. It was already ten years since the farmer had laid himself down to rest from his work;

but the pillow was still there and awaited him, as if it only had been yesterday that he had rested upon it—as if it would be to-day that, shaking the snow and rain from his hat, he would walk into the room. By the settee along the wall stood the spinning-wheels ready for the maids; opposite, on one side of the door, hung the pewter vessel for holy water, with two angels with flowing locks and with their wings raised for flight; on the other side of the door arose the brown, wooden case of the old house-clock, a splendid heirloom of the house; uppermost on its roof-shaped top there stood a cleverly carved chanticleer, who raised his wings as the hour struck, and, loudly crowing, lifted with one claw a flying scroll upon which was written :

At cock crow, Oh man ! bethink thee,
That after time there still awaits thee
A limitless eternity.

Before the stove, in the old brown-black leathern chair, sat the old lady, the mistress of the house, a gaunt tall figure, with features earnest but not unfriendly, whose expression was brightened by her silver-white hair, and

by the fixed look of her eyes, now dim with age. Her stiffened legs, always cold, were protected with wrappings; the position of her body was, in spite of her great age, very upright and firm. The woman was unbroken in spirit, and sat upright as if she could thereby assist her eyes, which hourly became less inclined to perform their usual severe task. Upon the lap of the old lady lay a coarse piece of knitting, with large wooden needles, such as the half-blind woman was able to use. She held in her hand at this moment a large rosary, and let the black beads slip from her fingers with low murmured prayers. She always had both of these at hand, in order to impart to her solitary retirement a little earthly variety and to alternate work with prayer, and join the last thread of human activity, which she still held here below, to the rays of eternity already dawning upon her.

"Who is this?" she asked, raising her head as she heard the door moving on its hinges.

It was Susi who entered. She did not answer, but advanced quietly, like a spirit, toward the

old lady, and seizing her hands, sank down on the stool at her feet. She was thinner and more delicate than when she had left the cross-road; but the pallor had disappeared, and her cheeks were flushed with a bright red, but the color was of a very strange brilliancy, not like the rays of a softly-glowing warmth, but like the reflection of a hidden fire, which secretly consumed and burned away the expiring life and vital power within her. Whoever had seen the maiden, could easily understand how it had occurred to the wily forester to reckon up beforehand the days still allotted to Susi, like the burning of a lamp to which the nourishing drops are doled by a penurious hand.

"It is you, my child," said the old lady, with a kindly voice. "You come and go, indeed, as quietly as a ghost. Only tell me what is the matter with you. You do not laugh; you do not weep; you have no pain and no joy. That is not right in a girl of your age. Formerly you were different. Could the two years in the city have changed you so entirely? What has happened to you? I

have already asked you so often, but you say nothing at all."

"Because I have nothing to say, aunty," answered Susi. "I am only sick. I have such pain within here, deep in my breast and heart."

"You are sinning, methinks, against my old, half-blind eyes," said the old lady, shaking her head. "If I still had my eyesight to look into your face, I could easily tell you whether you are sincere, or are deceiving and fibbing to the old sister of your mother."

"Aunty, be good to me," sighed Susi, stooping over her hand. "You cannot think what I endure."

"I believe it—I believe it truly; for I feel it, if I do not see it," answered the old lady, whilst she passed her hand caressingly over her face and brow; "but I must speak of it because I would have it different, because I wish you to be the dear, lively girl you were formerly. I fear it is too tedious and lonely for you at the solitary Manor Farm; perhaps you will change if you have a young companion to run about with, and prattle over what is in

your mind. How is it with Franzl, did she not promise to visit you, and perhaps remain with us altogether?"

"That she did," answered Susi, with a quick movement toward her heart, as if she felt a sudden pain. "At all events, she has promised to come, and I often believe that my heart will be free and well again if she keeps her word."

"Well then, be well and cheerful," said the old lady, encouragingly; "it will all be right again; for what Franzl has promised, she will keep; for a long time I have known her to be such a person. And you have the coarse dress on again," she continued, passing her hand over Susi's dress, "and the peasants' bodice; are you going to bid farewell for ever to your town wardrobe?"

"I wish to know nothing," cried Susi, quickly and with impulsive violence; "I wish to hear and see nothing more of the city."

"No, no," answered her aunt, laughing, "I will not compel you. It would have been well indeed, it has occurred to me, if from the first

you never had had anything to do with the town. I shall rejoice if you remain with us, and become a country woman again. But I would like to know why you are so disgusted with the town. I have thought about it often. Can't you take heart, Susi, and talk honestly with me? I am the sister of your dead mother. I love you as dearly as she did, for you were her last and dearest child. Is it so difficult for you, when you are with me, to imagine it is your mother that speaks to you?"

The girl, overcome, bent over and buried her confused face in the lap of the old woman. Another word, perhaps, would have sufficed to snap the cord which unmistakably bound Susi's mind, but it remained unspoken, for the door opened and a girl entered, and with the usual expression, "Praised be Jesus Christ," began to set the table for supper. The other servants, the men and the women, followed, and arranged themselves about the table. The coarse cloth was soon spread, the tin spoons distributed, the wooden plates set, and after a short grace said by the upper servant,

they went actively to work to empty the smoking dishes in the middle of the table.

"What do you think, mistress?" asked one of the men. "I think we will begin to-morrow with the threshing."

"It is much too soon," answered the lady. "It will be soon enough by St. Martin's Day."

"Yes, the courses of the year are not at all alike. This year we are going to have an early winter. Do you hear how it is storming without, and rattling at the shutters? It snows as hard as it can. It will certainly freeze to-night, and the snow will lie for the rest of the year."

"Why?" cried the mistress, in a reproving voice. "The world is not going to change so suddenly. To-day is St. Gallus' Day. I can remember over seventy years, and never in my whole life has the snow remained on St. Gallus' Day. Believe me, Heis, in the morning it will be clear again. The snow will be away, and the day after it will be dry again, and we can stack the oats on the upper fields. Take the seed away to-morrow, and have it

cleaned, so that so many vetches and darnels do not spring up in the next crop. That will be better than threshing. That has always been the custom at the Manor Farm, and shall remain so, as long as I am mistress of it. But what is the matter with the hostler, Wastl?" she continued, as no reply came from any one. "He is certainly not here, because I do not hear him. What is the matter with him?"

"Don't know," said the carpenter, in a surly tone. "He is probably gone to Mirsbach. He said that he had to go there to buy himself a pair of boots."

"What," said the old lady, kindling up; "he runs away from his work on a work day, without asking permission of me! Wants to buy himself boots? With what, then? Has he not already spent his wages for almost a half year in advance? He is a vicious clown, unfit for service at the Manor Farm. You can tell him, Heis, when he comes home, to tie up his bundle, and never to let me see him again."

"Ho! ho!" said the man-servant, growling,

"who would drive away a servant for staying out a little? Where will you get such another hostler as he is, mistress? An excellent manager is Wastl; that his worst enemy must admit."

"And if he were the best servant," said the mistress, quietly and with firmness, "and if he were the only one in the world, this is now the third time that he has played this trick—he shall come no more into the house. At the Manor Farm everything has gone on properly as long as it has stood. Nothing wrong has been allowed in it, and no bad people. That is the custom at the Manor Farm, and I have said it already; so it shall remain as long as I am mistress in this house. What is the matter with you, poor dear?" she interrupted herself, and laid her hand upon Susi's head, who had seized her arm and was holding it convulsively. "You are all in a tremble. Are you worse again?"

"I believe so," whispered Susi; "it must be so."

"Lie down, and see if you can go to sleep;

but first we must say evening prayers. It is an old habit, and you know I do not allow old habits to go out of use. Besides, I have always read them myself; but my eyes, my eyes. Can you read them, girl?"

"I think so," said Susi, rising; while the servants stood up, and pushing the benches aside, knelt by them. Susi had taken the prayer-book from the window-sill, and at the same moment the clock began to strike; eight times the cock flapped his wings, and raised to view the scroll with the warning for eternity. With trembling voice Susi said the introductory prayer, Our Father, of which all repeated after her the last petitions for pardon and deliverance from evil, with subdued voices. Then followed the intercessions for the deceased proprietors of the Manor Farm, and for all the relatives and friends of the house who had already passed into eternity; the prayer for the living formed the conclusion, the prayer that Heaven would assist them to complete their hard and weary way to salvation hereafter. Then was said the hymn, "Grant, O

God and Father mine," wherein occurs the following stanza :

May thy death's destructive pain,
Be for me, ah, not in vain ;
Shield me with thy mighty grace.

Susi was so overcome that it was impossible for her to utter the last words. The old lady immediately completed them, concluding with a firm voice,

Shield me with thy mighty grace,
And my misdeeds thus efface.

She would have said Amen, but at that moment the room was shaken by a heavy blow, which was struck outside, upon one of the shutters ; the window-panes rattled ; all sprang to their feet in confusion and astonishment, and gazed at each other with alarmed and questioning looks ; only the old lady stood up as straight as an arrow, as if her weary, swollen feet pained her no more, and with her dimmed eyes stared at the place whence the sound came, as if she thought to pierce through the double darkness.

"Who dares," exclaimed she, angrily, "to play such tricks at a respectable house ! Go

out there, Heis, and you other fellows, and catch the good-for-nothing fellow who disturbs evening prayers and the quiet of the household."

"Ah, I know what it will be," said the servant, delaying; "probably some drunken man going home from market."

"Out with you," said the old lady again, angrily. "Out with you, and see whether anything has happened to the house. The drunkard may even burn the house over my head, if I allow it; or have you not courage enough, Heis, and must I go myself?"

Abashed, the servant took the lamp from the shelf and tardily poked about the wick, until having at last lighted it, he slowly and unwillingly left the room with the other servants, and the girls crowded after him in their curiosity, but at a shy distance. For a short time there was breathless silence in the room; and in the hearing of those who remained behind, only the clock ticked, the fire crackled, and a frightened fly fell buzzing against the window panes. The searchers had nearly

gone round the house, when behind, from the direction of the barn, a great outcry was heard.

"They have found something," murmured the mistress of the Manor Farm. "What can it be?"

Soon one of the girls came back, clapping her hands and crying out. "We have it," exclaimed she, while still at a distance. "It is a nice present. They have presented you with a child, Mistress. A real live child was lying out there on the barn floor in the hay."

Over the haggard countenance of the old lady spread an angry flush.

"Have presented a child? To me? On the Manor Farm?" exclaimed she, as if out of her mind. "Can such a thing have happened to me? Who has dared to put such a shame on me and on my honest house?"

"Who?" responded the girl, laughing. "That will be hard to say; but who ever did it, well understood that the mistress of the Manor Farm is a rich woman, and a good woman, who can and will easily bring up the poor child, as I—"

"See to this, Susi," exclaimed the old lady, recovering her former composure. "I wish to hear from you what it is."

But the girl did not move. It seemed as if the weakness of the old woman, at whose feet she had fallen upon her knees, had come upon her; over her face passed the paleness as of a swoon, alternating with a fever flush; her breath had gone, and the hand which she stretched toward a chair, to rest upon it, trembled and was unable to grasp it. However, it was unnecessary for her to go, for already one of the servants had come back, and brought a confirmation of what had happened.

"This is a beautiful story," said he, gayly. "And how nicely it has all been arranged! In such weather as this, when even if one wished to go in pursuit, the wind would blow out the light at the first moment; and when it storms and blows so that the footprints are obliterated before one can turn a hand! It must have been some one who was thoroughly familiar with the place; for he knew exactly that behind the stable door a plank was loose;

there he slept in, and gave himself full time, for he drew down a whole load of hay and straw from the stall, and made a bed, that the child might lie nicely and warmly, and nothing might happen to it, until some one should find it; it was also well wrapped up, in a nice little coverlet. But the girls are bringing it in now, and you can see for yourself."

"Stop," cried out the old lady, loudly and imperatively; and turned to the door, where the girl, with the child in her arms, had already placed her foot on the threshold. "Back there! Take the child away, wherever you will; it cannot enter my rooms. The Manor Farm is no place for such a child of sin."

The people stood irresolute and surprised at the harshness of the old lady, who, in spite of her strictness in other matters, and her decision, now displayed something unusual in her manner. All were occupied with themselves and the unexpected occurrence. No one thought of Susi, whose emotion had been feverishly excited to the highest degree. With a great effort she staggered to the old lady,

seized her hands, and pressed them in speechless fondness to her brow and lips.

"Is it you, Susi?" said the old lady. "Do you wish to intercede for this pitiful little creature, from whom its wicked mother has separated herself, and exposed it to the wind and weather; as if perchance some one might be more compassionate than she, and take care of it? I will say nothing more. I will restrain myself. But first examine and see if the child has nothing about it from which we may discover whose it is."

The servant girls did not await a repetition of this order, which coincided so well with their desire to satisfy their curiosity.

"How soundly it sleeps," said one, laying on the table the little thing freed from its surrounding pillows. "It knows nothing of all that has happened to it. And what a delicate, pale little face, and thin, transparent hands it has—as tender as an infant Savior's in wax. And there, under the wrappings, some writing is carefully pinned to its breast."

"Bring the paper here," exclaimed the old lady. "Susi, take and read what is on it."

The girl put her hand over her eyes, for everything was confused, and swam before them as in a mist. She read :

I kindly beg thee, take me in ;
Wash me, too, from inborn sin ;
Fatherless, motherless, is my lot,
For God's sake, then, reject me not.

All were silent for a moment. Susi had cast herself upon her aunts' breast, and wept bitterly. The cock upon the clock crowed again, and warned them of eternity.

"No," said the old lady, while she came nearer and groped toward the child, as if she did not see it, and laid her hand as in blessing upon its brow. "Reject you I will not ! The house cock proclaims how near to me, probably, that vast eternity already is. I will improve the remnant of life still granted to me, and will try to make good that wherein another has sinned. Remain with me, poor little worm. I will take care of thee in place of thy dishonored, godless mother."

"That is beautiful and excellent in the mis-

tress," said the servant girl, wiping her eyes; "but probably she may be too severe on the mother. Who knows in what dire necessity and shame she may be, and how her heart bleeds that she was obliged to desert her child."

"Be quiet," exclaimed the old lady, excitedly. "Of that I will hear nothing. I will receive the child, and will take care of it, for that may be right and proper, and may even do honor to the Manor Farm. But of the mother I will hear or see nothing. She shall not appear before me. If her necessity was so great that it even reached to heaven, and her shame as deep as hell, she should have persevered and have borne it, but she should not have given up her child—aye, rather ten times she should have let her heart break and bleed."

No one ventured on a reply.

"And now," continued she, after a pause; "now go and get to bed. It is long past the time. You come too, Susi. The child can lie there. Nothing can happen to it, and if it moves we can easily hear it from the chamber. You can leave the lamp burning that we may

have a light, if it is needed. And, Heis," said she, turning to the chamber and then looking back, "you will now have something to do in the morning. Andre must winnow the oats, but do you go as early as possible to the priest, and then to the court, and relate what has happened; and now, good-night."

The servants went away in silence. The old lady, accompanied by Susi, went into the dark side-chamber, and soon the perfect quiet showed that sleep had spread out its soothing wings over the household. The light was burning dimly, when, like a ghost, as the old lady would have described it, Susi in her night-dress crept out of the chamber. Upon her eyes alone, sleep had not fallen. She staggered to the table; near it she fell upon her knees, and stretching out her arms to heaven, murmured a fervent prayer of thanksgiving to God, intelligible only to him; then she approached the child, and, bending her face down, covered it with ardent kisses.

It was only natural that the intelligence of what had happened at the Manor Farm should

be noised abroad everywhere, and that the report flew from farm to farm, and from village to village, as if it had been announced by far-gleaming beacon fires, or spread abroad by the water riders, so called, who, on occasion of any unusual freshet, hurry out into the low country, hastening on in advance of the rising waters, to carry intelligence that the mountain torrents are rushing down, and that a flood may come raging behind them. The unusual character of the thing, in itself was sufficient to excite universal curiosity, but the many peculiar circumstances were specially calculated to make it interesting; conjecture and suspicion, originating in the love of scandal and increased by curiosity, kept even pace with the report; and for both of these a very fruitful field was opened; the more so, the less chance there appeared of any result from the circumstantial evidence, which was at once on the succeeding days examined by the court, and the more uncertain any conclusion became from the inquiries instituted in all directions by the priest and the Bailiff. The circum-

stantial evidence, indeed, proved nothing. The prophecy of the mistress of the Manor Farm had been fulfilled. Toward morning, the warm wind had begun to blow over the mountains, and in a few hours had melted away all the snow, as if never a flake had fallen ; only here and there, under the shadow of a tree, or along a quick-set hedge, was any of it left lying, either in a drift, or in a peculiarly sheltered position. In one such place, to be sure, foot-prints were found, which seemed to be made by a woman's feet, but there was nothing by which to recognize them, being only the impress of a shoe, such as was commonly worn by all the women of that region. The next neighbor, indeed, the proprietor of an isolated farm lying a little below, had had his attention excited on that evening by the noisy barking of his dog, and thrusting his head out of a small window, thought he had seen a woman's figure, which came running in the direction of the Manor Farm ; but the wind, the heavy snow storm, and her thick wrappings, had made it impossible for him to

recognize her. In opposition to this, the familiarity with the place exhibited in the whole affair, and also the entire silence of the house-dog, generally so watchful, led one irresistibly to the conclusion that the one who had done it must have been an acquaintance at the house; indeed, an after discovered circumstance seemed for a time calculated to throw full light in this direction, but it only served in the end to increase still more the obscurity and doubt.

A few days after the finding of the child, the shepherd-boy of the Manor Farm found at the hole in the wooden door through which she had squeezed in, hanging to a projecting nail, a piece of stuff from a woman's dress, the quality and pattern of which were so peculiar, and so different from what was usually worn, that they hoped to find in the wearer of such a garment, the one who did this thing. It was soon discovered that only a single shop-keeper at the last fair had had this stuff in his booth, and the rest of it he had long vainly offered for sale, cheap. The one-half of the remnant had been purchased more than a year

before by the foster-daughter of the farmer of the Oaks, Franzi, the beautiful waitress at the Cross-Roads Inn. The other piece, a few weeks before, a peddleress had purchased, a Tyrolese woman, who, with country goods in a pack on her back, went peddling from village to village ; and besides the wares, she carried with her a child in the basket. Now conjecture persistently inclined to this, that it was she who at the Manor Farm espied a convenient opportunity to rid herself of her burden in a good way. And the age of the child accorded with this, for that one also was two months old. It must indeed, for it was still unbaptized, have been kept concealed in a very mysterious way, and have been withheld from the notice of the secular as well as of the spiritual authorities.

That was easily accounted for by the wandering life of its mother.

So it happened, that nothing led to a clue to the one who had done this thing. The little girl remained, well tended and cared for, at the Manor Farm ; and after some time, nothing remained of the whole report, except the circum-

stance that Franzi's name had been mentioned in the matter, and had been suspiciously implicated in it.

Although, indeed, Franzi's conduct throughout and up to this time had been blameless; although no one could point out the slightest circumstance which could serve as a confirmation of such an opinion, yet the report, once noised abroad, never again died out; it spread as a poisonous worm creeps in unseen under the high grass. Many to whom Franzi had made herself disagreeable by her positive and imperious manner, believed it with that delight which common minds always receive as a pleasurable vengeance when they see a noble nature, obnoxious on account of its virtues, stumble or take a step calculated to draw it down to their own level.

Those favorably disposed toward her, shrugged their shoulders; they did not believe it, and yet it did not seem to them impossible; they realized that naturally she was peculiarly suited, by her decision of character and quiet disposition, to accomplish such an undertaking

with so much cunning, and at the same time to preserve appearances so successfully. There were only a few places into which the report did not force itself, only a few persons whose attention it did not engage; of these few were Stasi and the mistress of the Manor Farm, to whom no one cared to mention it, for if the suspicion proved correct, her former connection with them could not be forgotten; and also among this number was Franzi herself, who quietly and without disturbance attended to her duty and did her work, until the time came for her to surrender to another her position at the Cross-Roads Inn. Probably the court had not lost sight of the matter, but hesitated, on account of Franzi's entirely blameless conduct heretofore, to advance the charge; and none of the guests at the inn, who discussed the matter, went so far as to give any intimation of it to the high-spirited waitress, for they knew her power of retort, and that she had neither good temper nor patience to bear a cross word without defending herself.

Franzi had only three more days to remain

at the Cross-Roads Inn, when one evening the forester arrived there unexpectedly. Since the first meeting there, he had not been seen again ; but meanwhile, as they continually reported who came for refreshment, he had purchased a place desirably located on the road and near a small stream, and had diligently begun the business partnership with Meister Staudinger, which they had agreed upon. She could not avoid asking what he would have, and waiting on him ; but in supplying his wants she did not observe that at his first entrance he saluted her with special familiarity, and winked at her as if in token of some secret understanding.

“Quick,” said he, “only a glass of warm wine, but strongly spiced, for the north wind blows right through one’s cloak even to the skin. I cannot wait ; I was only hurrying by, and told my servant to take the horses to the stable for a moment without unharnessing them. Sit here beside me, Franzi, and let us have a sensible talk together.”

“I will not disturb you, Herr Aicher,” said she, “lest you forget your important business.”

"Oh, I forget nothing which I once have in mind," said he, seating himself, and then thanking the host, who approached at once, for his welcome. "What! desert those gentlemen for me; that is not right, such old friends as we are; if people hear it, they will indeed believe that I have fallen into the sin of pride. What say you to this? I have finished a good piece of business to-day, and have vowed to myself to build a chapel. You did not expect that of me, did you?"

"Truly not," responded Franz, scornfully, who at a sign from the host had remained at the table, but had not noticed the motion of the hand by which, moving aside, the forester invited her to take a seat beside him.

"Yes, this is my way," continued he. "When things go well with me, I always at once think how I may show to the good God that I am thankful for his blessings. At first I thought of building an entirely new chapel, and have already been quietly looking about everywhere for a place where it could stand, so that persons could see it from all sides, and at some distance."

"And would praise the pious Herr Aicher who built it," inserted Franz, in a scornful tone, as before.

The forester shot from his eyes a dark, lowering side glance at her, but bethought himself in a moment, and continued, with his usual quiet smile.

"Why not? There would be nothing wrong in that. It is written 'that one shall not hide his light under a bushel, but shall let it shine before men.' However, I have changed my mind. Do you know, landlord, the old ruined chapel where pilgrims used to resort, near the forest?"

"Certainly," answered he. "The one with the miracle-working picture of the Blessed Virgin with the seven wounds. There was at one time a great pilgrimage there every year, but lately it has been entirely neglected, so that it has almost gone to destruction."

"Therefore, because I thought it would be injurious to the beautiful old building, I will have the church fitted up again. Whether I build a new chapel or refit an old one, comes, indeed, to one and the same thing."

"At all events, it is much cheaper," said Franz, dryly.

"Well, well! one knows you, already," said the forester, restraining himself, though much incensed. "You are always ready with sharp words; but I believe that is just the thing which, after your beautiful eyes, pleases me so much in you."

"I cannot wait any longer," answered she, while the landlord went into the kitchen to look after the spiced wine.

"But you must, though," said he, familiarly pressing closer to her; "just that I may tell you at once, why I came here. It is entirely for your sake that I have come to-day. I have bought myself a pretty farm, but I have still something very different in my mind. There is a cheap inn for sale, which I might buy, but I must have a careful housekeeper, and especially a beautiful waitress, with whom the guests will be pleased to amuse themselves. On that account I am here. Promise that you will go with me, and early to-morrow I will go to the notary and close the bargain."

Franzi scanned him with a dark glance.

"No," said she, turning to go, "I will not make myself a stool pigeon. That you should make me such an offer, Herr Aicher, has astonished me not a little; and I have only listened to it because I thought of how many benefits I have enjoyed from your honest and wise parents, the remembrance of which I have treasured up in my heart, as one treasures up an amulet or something holy. But, as far as you are concerned, this remembrance is now outweighed by what you have said to-day. In my regard you have now no longer a balance in your favor, and if we should meet again we are quits in our reckoning."

"Do not get on your high horse," said he, fixing his eager eyes on the girl's face, animated and beautiful with the flush of indignation, and holding her fast by the arm. "For what have I said so strange? Be wise, my dear girl, and come with me. You will find no better place if you search the whole world."

"I need no place," said she, indignantly; "I have already hired myself."

"I have heard of that already," said he, in obstinate importunity. "You wish to be in the city. You are a very wise person, and know on which side your bread is buttered! But with me you will be much better off than in the city. See here, I do not think of marrying. If you are wise, you may have with me a life as pleasant as heaven. I will do everything you wish, to please you. Do not be so coy. That suited you very well before, but now—"

At these words Franzi became very pale and attentive, as breathless and with wide-stretched eyes she hung upon the meaning of his words.

"Well," she let fall in a scarcely audible voice, "But now—"

"I believe in you no more now," said the for-ester, with sly triumph; "we know each other better now, and that is, indeed, the second thing which pleases me so much in you. You perceive that there is no use keeping up appearances before people, and throwing sand into the eyes of the stupid world, so as to do in secret what you will!"

"Oh! Do I perceive that?" stammered the girl.

"Certainly you do!" laughed he, considering his game already won. "Do you think I do not know, no matter how modest you pretend to be, that you are quite familiar with love affairs? Ha! ha! ha! How I have laughed to myself at the cunning way you managed it and got rid of the inconvenient witness. If I had not been in love with you before, I would certainly become so now, since that precious dodge at the Manor Farm."

The blood returned to Franzi's cheeks, motion to her limbs.

"And who," cried she, all aflame, "who is it, then, who thinks and says that of me? Who dares—"

"Oh! What are you feigning for?" asked the forester, as he half arose, and tried to wind his arm around her. "As if all the world were not hissing it! Everybody says it, and I, who know you now entirely, say so, too. Give up pretending—before me at least; take off the mask, and give me an answer to my offer."

"I cannot meet everybody," replied Franzi, "and cannot speak with all the world, but whoever speaks with me, he shall have my answer too. An old proverb says: 'To a lie belongs a blow.' So say I, too, and—that is my answer!"

On the instant, a loud sounding blow fell on the hypocrite's face, so that the guests assembled in the large sitting-room looked up and gazed astonished toward the next apartment, out of which Franzi stepped, perfectly composed, and applied herself to the rinsing of the vessels, in which occupation the arrival of the guest had interrupted her. The forester stood still a moment, as if struck by lightning, tottering, with gnashing teeth, with clinched fists, and rolling eyes, a picture of unmasked wickedness and impotent rage.

"Be sure, *canaille*, you'll rue this!" muttered he, and gathering together his things, he rushed out of the room, past the startled landlord, who was just then returning with the tardy glass of spiced wine.

In a few seconds his team was rushing

wildly forth into the night, driven with furious lash. He had gone a good way into the forest. Between the gloomy fir-trees, which, lofty and black, pressed on both sides of the dusky highway, the just risen, waning moon looked down and played with the overhanging boughs and tree tops—a dismal play of light-and-shadow pictures on the ground.

Some time elapsed before the storm in the raging blood of the furious man had so far abated that he could again think clearly and composedly, and became conscious of what was going on around him. Astonished and surprised, he was aware that over his seat a shadow projected from behind, which did not change, and seemed not to come from the trees or clouds. Just as he was about to turn around toward it, the sound of a man's voice relieved him from further examination. A man sat behind him, cowering upon the wagon board.

"I think," said he, in a tone of cool indifference, "you should now let the sorrels have a little breathing spell. You have driven so that I thought every moment a wheel must

fly off. Don't look at me so astonished, Herr Forester; I am undoubtedly the one you take me for, the rag-picker, Alisi."

"Fellow," said the forester, "how do you come here? And what do you want of me?"

"How do I come here?" cried Alise, laughing. "With you, Herr Forester. I got in here behind your wagon before the Inn at the Cross-Roads, and have let you drive me out here as a way passenger. What do I want? You shall know that too. I wish to have the property again they have stolen from me, and for that purpose I must have money, and that money—yes, that money—you shall give me."

"Out of my wagon," cried the forester, as the rag-picker raised himself up, and seemed about to bend over him. "Are you drunk, fellow, or what is the matter with you?"

He jumped toward him and tried to force him down from the foot-board, but Alisi clutched hold of the wagon so resolutely that he was obliged to give up the attempt.

"Drunk?" cried the vagabond. "If a man can get drunk with poison, and gall, and

trouble, and heart-ache, then I may be drunk. Nothing else, almost, have I put into my mouth for the last eight days. I know perfectly well what I am saying and doing, Herr Forester, though I have such a queer, heavy feeling about the head that it seems as if I had a vertigo—. The time is past; it won't serve them, the miserable excuses they try to put off on me. I will have my property again; I have already told you so. It is said the man who got it has been turned out already; there is no luck nor blessing with unjustly acquired property. He will again be sold out, in turn, and I'll buy it, and you, Herr Forester; it comes to this: you must give me the money to do it with."

"I? And must, again?" cried the forester, impatiently. "And why? Go your way, I tell you; if you are not drunk, you are crazy, or you think I am. Get out; don't detain me. I can't be kept out here in the night and darkness on the public highway by you for half an hour. Leave the wagon at once, I tell you, or I'll make you!"

"Then we must first see who is the better man," exclaimed Alisi, laughing. "Not every one has a fist like Sixt of Oak Farm, though he may have grown on the same tree. Why should I get out, then? You can at least listen to me. You help me, and I can help you, too, in return."

"You help me?" said the forester, contemptuously. "In what?"

"In what you now have in your mind," said the rag-picker, and bent over him as if he were afraid of being observed even in that darkness and solitude. "In what you must now have in your mind. You will readily understand me, when I tell you that I was hanging about the tavern and accidentally looked in at the window and saw how Franz —I hate that creature," continued he, while the forester winced, as if he had been touched on a sore spot, and bit his lips. "I hate her like poison. I would give a finger of my right hand if I could wreak my rage on her; if I could do something to her to put her under water so that she couldn't soon come to the

top again. The kicking I underwent on her account, I would like to give her back. And I imagine you must wish the same."

The forester was silent for a few moments after Alisi had ended.

"Come up here on the seat, and sit beside me," said he at last; "we can talk better about it as we go on."

"Ah, now you talk to please me!" cried the rag-picker, and in a minute he had clambered like a cat over the boxes laid behind to the seat, on which he comfortably seated himself. "Now we can have a cosy talk together!"

"But what do you think?" began the forester. "If I really had that in my mind what you imagine, how would you manage to pay her back, what she has done to me—to you?"

"Nothing easier than that," whispered Alisi. "Some great disgrace must be fastened on her which will drag her down as if a millstone had been hung around her neck—something that will ruin her all her life, so that no dog even will take a piece of bread from her. The same thing must be done to her that has

been done to me. The Haberfeld court must get hold of her as it did of me—so that no man will look at her except over the shoulder, as they do at me—so that every one will kick at her as they do at me.”

“Truly, truly,” answered the forester, quickly, with an expression evincing malicious joy. “That would be the best revenge. Fellow, you are more artful than I gave you credit for. Yes; that would be the way to hit her on the most sensitive point. She prizes the appearance of a blameless life, in her pride, above everything. But you do me wrong if you measure me by your measure! I think not on revenge; that were unchristian, for one must forgive one’s enemies; but for her own good, for her improvement, a little admonition would do her no harm. If the mask were torn from her face, that would most likely compel her to reflect and to lay aside her haughtiness. But what you say, dear friend, is difficult to do. The Haberfeld does not act lightly, and requires proof.”

“Oh!” cried Alisi, “many a man can tell

you how to do that! But if nothing else is wanting but proof, I can furnish it."

"You!" replied the forester, with eager haste. "You could. Listen, fellow! if you accomplish that; then, in that event, you shall have the money and get back your property."

"Didn't I say we would strike a bargain? Your hand on it and agreed—it's all right!"

"But what do you know? Is what people say, true?"

"True! On St. Gallus' night I saw her myself, not two gun-shots from the Manor Farm, with the child she had had, in her arms. I could have sworn it was she."

"When you don't know anything for certain, what use will it be?"

"I rushed after her, but she escaped me. However, I was more cunning than she. I thought to myself, if that was Franz, she can't now be at the inn; and if I run for it, I will anyhow get there before her; and if she is not at home, then it was she I saw with the child. I ran then like a fox, over stock and stone, for

the inn ; but there was no need of the hurry. Franzi was not there, and she didn't come home the whole night ; the inn-keeper said she had gone away early on the railroad, to Munich, for the purpose of looking for a place. Yes, she certainly wanted to look for a place, but for her child, which she has had concealed with the aid of an accomplice. And therefore, I say, it was Franzi ; and for that, I would put my hand in the fire ! ”

“ Yes, yes, it is clear, quite clear ! It all agrees quite naturally,” murmured the forester, with spiteful pleasure. “ That will be more than enough to humble and punish her. But, why didn't you say that long ago ? ”

“ Because I wished to wait for the right time,” answered the rag-picker. “ She is now so much the more sure, and I have lain in wait for her, like a spider in its web, which has woven its threads at all corners ; no day has gone by, and no night, in which I have not hung around at the Cross-Roads, like a hunter in his hunting district ; and if I had been willing to speak, what would have been the

use of it? A ragamuffin, a poor devil as I am, no one would have believed. They would have said, I was set against her on account of the kicking, and wished to injure her, or that I was a fool, or had been drinking again. No, Herr Forester, if there is any strength in this thing and it is to be used, an entirely different man must open his mouth and face it out!"

"Right, right!" cried the forester, eagerly. "It is all excellent, as you have thought it out. You are a sharp fellow! But what is the good of talking and all this preparation? They say the Habersfeld will meet in a few days; how must we act, so that it will get hold of her? How and where can we find the Haberers?"

"I can help you out of that difficulty too," said the rag-picker, slyly. "It will be held all secretly and silently, but no attention will be paid to a half-crazy man like me, and they will go on talking without restraint, as if a dog lay on the bench or under the table, that can't say anything about it. Now, if I am always treated like a dog, I have at least this good from it, that I can get at all sorts of things as

no other man can. Let me drive, Herr Forester; there goes yonder a side road straight into the wood; don't fear, for I know every tree in the forest. I know where one must look for the Haberers, and how we can get to them. Follow me."

Without waiting for assent, he took the reins out of the forester's hands, drove the horses across the ditch into an open lane, leading right through the forest, from which all the wood had been cut away, and where the wagon rolled noiselessly along over the mossy ground. Neither of the two spoke any more. It was uncomfortable traveling between the closely touching fir-trees, which, at intervals, bent further forward, as if curious to look at the night travelers more closely, and to recognize them. The waning moon was concealed behind the clouds, and the sky stretched out its black-grayish, starless expanse over the gloomy forest road below. Nothing was audible except now and then, in the far distance, the barking of a dog in a peasant's hut, or the striking of the church clock of a little village

hidden far away behind the forest, or now and then the cracking or breaking among the bushes and thicket, as some startled wild animal fled before the approaching travelers.

Light at last appeared in the midst of a large open space, covered with turf, to which from other sides, clear, well-beaten roads led and met together by a little church, whose weather-worn, colorless walls stood out from the dark background of woodland, only by means of their fainter coloring, and thus alone were visible. At some distance from the church the rag-picker halted and drove the team into a low shed, open on all sides.

"That is the beer-house the inn-keeper has built to the honor of the Blessed Virgin. There is great pilgrimage to the chapel, and our Lady's Day alone brings him, if it is still tolerably good harvest weather, so much, that he could afford to do nothing all the winter. There is a great deal of piety done here, and many prayers make the lips and the throat dry. You see, yonder is the chapel. I will be about here when you want me."

They whispered together awhile longer, then the forester stepped toward the church. The door was closed, but from within there sounded the murmur of suppressed voices, and through the high arched windows played a dusky light, as if within burned the eternal lamp.

In the church it was almost perfectly dark ; a dim light, which came from the altar, rendered barely discernible how on the weather-worn walls, from which the plaster had fallen off, the mold had fastened, and the green moss had crept up from the crumbled and damp tiling of the loose pavement, where it had grown and flourished luxuriantly. The buttresses and plinths of the walls were barely distinguishable against the deep, black shadows behind them, and were lost in the impenetrable gloom of the high arched vault which arose above them. The wood-work of the side altars was dripping with moisture and had in it gaping cracks ; the stone steps which led up to the chancel were worn away, and well-nigh broken to pieces ; at the high altar, one of the altar doors hung ready to fall from its rusty hinges ;

the carving and figures were covered over with dust and cob-webs, the colors faded, and the gildings tarnished. Over the altar, and rather in the middle of it, stood a carved wooden figure of the Madonna, which had seven swords thrust in her breast, and looked up to heaven with clasped hands and tearful eyes. The light of the lantern which stood on the steps of the high altar, cast its rays up to this figure, and to the face so full of sorrow, but its glimmer reached no further than the black body of the cross which towered above the image like a giant in the night.

Around the light on the altar steps, eight men were collected, seated in a half circle on chairs and forms of all sorts, which they had brought together from the body of the church, all wrapped in dark mantles, their faces bound in black cloths, and great peasants' hats drawn down on their foreheads. A ninth sat in the midst, overtopping all in stature, independently of the somewhat elevated chair on which he sat. In his right hand he held a wisp of oat-ears.

“Thus it stands adjudged! ye ancients of Leizach, Mangfall, and Shlierach,” said he, with assumed hollow sounding, but fully distinct voice. “There shall again be a Habermfeld held, as is the right and custom in our province, and I impose upon ye, that ye send forth the messengers to announce, in the Emperor’s name, that between this time and the first day of the new moon, all misdeeds will be presented and punished which are done in secret, to the shame of the whole province. No one shall perceive whom judgment menaces, for it shall come according to the old ordinance, like fire at midnight. Observe signs and tokens, by your oath! And now, if ye have nothing against it, ye ancients, I rise and say, in the Emperor’s name, the court is over!”

He was about to stand up, but one of the men made a sign and exclaimed :

“Forget not, master, the summons and citation must first be given; the law stands thus, though no one appear!”

“You are right,” replied the master; “but ye must make allowance, ye ancients, for I am

still but new in mine office! And thus," continued he, with elevated voice, "give I summons and citation to all the four winds of the world, and call on whosoever has an accusation to make before the Emperor and the Haber court, to appear and present his charge and produce his evidence, before I have struck on the floor thrice with my staff."

He raised the staff and let it fall, and the two first blows sounded hollow on the stone pavement of the chancel; only a feeble echo answered back from vaulted roof and walls. At the third blow there was a knocking at the church door, and a voice cried out from the distance, "Open, worshipful judge, I accuse, I accuse, I accuse!"

One of the old men went and opened the door, and led the person who had entered to the chancel railing, whither he ordered him to go in silence.

It was the forester. At the sight of him the vailed master was greatly moved. He seemed about to rise, but the ancients turned, with questioning gesture, their shrouded heads to-

ward him, so that he managed to compose and reseal himself on the master's seat. With solemn, quiet tone he proceeded to ask the questions concerning the accuser's charge, name, and wish.

He was enabled fully to master his emotion when the accuser answered and named Franzi as the person against whom a sentence of the inexorable court over morals and honor was demanded.

The forester did not lose that audacity peculiar to him, and though he could not help feeling the solemn impression which the assembly of unknown judges in their powerfully efficient singleness of purpose, as well as the place of their assembling, produced upon him in spite of himself, nevertheless, he uttered his accusation in a firm voice. By the uncertain, feeble light of the lantern, it was not discernable that a transient paleness overspread his face.

"I accuse her," said he, "for that she hypocritically assumes before the world the bearing of an honest, true maiden, while in secret she

is guilty of sinful love with an unknown lover ; for that she has secretly kept, with the aid of a concealed accomplice, the fruit of her crime ; for that she has withheld from her child the blessing of the church ; and for that, finally, to rid herself of her burden, she has cast it from her, and deserted it as a foundling."

"Rumor accuses her of this," said the judge, "the court demands proof!"

"She was not at home on the night of the deed. I can produce the witness who saw her at the self same time, at the Manor Farm, with the child in her arms."

"Knowest thou, also, that an unexceptionable householder must answer for the charge, as bail and pledge?"

"I know it. I will myself be bail, if you will accept me."

The master looked inquiringly toward his associates. They signified their assent by silent nods.

"Then I ask thee, Balthasar Aicher, once again," recommenced the judge, and arose ; the ancients did likewise. "I ask thee before

our Lord God, and in the name of the Emperor: Accuser, standst thou by thy charge?"

"I do."

"If it be false, answerest thou for it with body and limb, with goods and life, with honor and arms?"

"I do."

"Then I ask, in the third place, whether there be any one in the court who has aught to plead for the accused?"

All were silent.

"Then she is judged and condemned by the Haberfeld," was the sentence of the master, and his voice trembled. "Executioner, I give her over to thee, as I tear and scatter to the ground these ears of oats. Have care that she escape not the punishment. And now depart ye all to the four winds. Lead the accuser away, and disperse ye. The court is over."

He lifted the staff, and struck out the light of the lantern. Noiselessly and invisibly the ancients glided from the church, now entirely dark, into the gloomy woods, and disappeared like shadows among the trees. On the

chair of the high altar still tarried the master alone, his arm resting on his knee, and his forehead sunk upon his hand. It was dark and gloomy in his soul, as in the sanctuary which surrounded him.

“Then it was really true!” murmured he to himself. “She is so wicked, so utterly wicked, and so complete a hypocrite! Her bad conscience has spoken out of her, therefore is she thus brought under the Haberfeld. She shall have what is due her; but that she should be the first whom I must judge, I could never have dreamt of. It is hard, bitterly hard; but it must be!”

He arose quickly. As he left the church, the dawn had already broken, and the morning star hung, like an eye of love sparkling with tears, over the gloomy forest.

CHAPTER IV.

"BE careful that the shutters are closed all over the house, and the doors well secured," cried out the inn-keeper at the Cross-Roads, while he ran hither and thither in the dim, deserted public room, and tried the shutters himself, to see whether the fastenings on the inside were all right. "And be careful, too, that the fire on the hearth is put out, and don't show any lights!"

The servants ran in various directions to carry out their orders; the hostler alone lingered and fumbled with his stable lantern, in which the wick did not seem inclined to burn properly.

"But why are you so particular to-night, Sir?" asked he. "What do you fear? What's going to happen to-night?"

"What's going to happen? Don't make out, Dick, that you don't know! Though we're no Haberers, we two, yet everybody

knows that a Haberfeld will be executed this very night."

"Well, what difference will that make?" answered the servant, phlegmatically. "They won't come to us; and if they should happen to come, they'll do nothing to us, we have a good conscience."

"All right, and very well," said the landlord, nervously. "But the devil knows what the cussed fellows may think wrong; and if this is not so, it would be enough for me if they should stop and put up here with me! It happened to me once before, about three years ago, when they came this way from the church in the woods, and executed a Haberfeld on Strekenbrauer, the rascally brewer, because he put aloes into his brewing instead of hops. The whole gang of them were in the house here, all at once; nothing but coal-blackened devils with swords, and guns, and huge beards, just like the Bavarian Hiesel that one sees painted, or the Schinderhannes. They swarmed in here like imps, and for half an hour I was no longer master of my own house. They

fetches up a couple of casks of beer out of my cellar, cleared out cakes and meat, and had no need of cook or waiter-girl. In a half hour they were gone again, like the imp when he flies away, or like the settling of high water, which goes, no man can tell where. But one must tell the truth, and I must say that for every pail of beer they paid one guilder more than it cost; and for every piece of bread, they laid down the money right honestly, and so too for a couple of tankards they broke to pieces in their hurry."

"Well," was Dick's opinion, "then it was rather a good thing; there was no trouble in taking the money, I should think!"

"Yes, that was very well, but I had to pay for it, too!" answered the landlord. "That same brewer had a cousin, who has become a great man there in the city, and they determined to try and find out who the Haberers were, and who were engaged in it. They learned that they had stopped here, and I shake in my skin now, when I think of it, how much time I was obliged to lose, how often I

was summoned before the court, because they thought I ought certainly to know the people who had stopped at my inn."

The servant smiled. "They couldn't stick their noses into anything there," said he.

"Yes, that's so, they were so disguised and muffled up that I believe if my own father had been among them, I couldn't have recognized him. I couldn't tell them anything, and they didn't find out anything, as far as I know!"

"And even if they had come across one, how would that have helped them? It is well known that no Haberer betrays another; and whoever did it, would have a very short time to live afterwards, I think."

"Therefore, I wish to live in peace, and don't wish to know anything about it," said the landlord, and snatched up his candle, because just then the men-servants and maids came back from their round of inspection. "Even if nothing else resulted from it, the vexation would occur again, and this time in real earnest; for the new Bailiff, the Baron, is

one of those who straightens things out at once. He would crush me if I were connected with anything like this, and just at this time I must be on good terms with him. Haselstiff, just out there at the entrance to the forest, would like to set up an inn in his poisonous hole. If anything came out against me, the Bailiff would give him the license on the slightest pretense, and half of my business would be destroyed by the mere stroke of his pen."

"That's so," said the hostler, whilst he looked around with a sly laugh, to see if anybody overheard him. "This time it would be doubly bad. You have certainly heard about it, Sir?"

"What should I have heard?"

"On whom the Haberfeld will be executed this time. The Bailiff will also come under its sentence."

"That surprises me! What has he done?"

"I don't know exactly, but I have heard it said that it is on account of the disputes be-

tween the Osterbrunn community and the Westerbrunners about the forest."

"The thing is well known, they have made a fine compromise; Sixt of the Oaks brought it about."

"And the trouble is just on account of that compromise. The Bailiff reported it to the Government, and told the peasants that he had praised the compromise very much, and had spoken in its favor, so that it would be confirmed; but the peasants, who are very much interested that the business should be speedily settled, thought that at least it could do no harm if it were a little pushed forward, so they sent a deputation into the city, and they came before the Government in fine spirits; but they were soon done for. They were told that they were rebellious subjects, and then it came out that the report of the Bailiff had been against the compromise."

"Your story makes me uneasy," said the inn-keeper, still more nervously. "If these things happen, it would be well if I knew a mouse-hole into which I could creep for the

next eight days. But now go away at once," said he, turning to the rest; "we must get to bed before anything happens, and take care that no light is left burning, and that each of you remains shut up in his room. Where is Franzi, that she is not to be seen?"

Upon the reply of one of the maids, that she had long ago shut herself up in her room, the landlord was about to go, when the last of the servants came running in from the stable.

"Pst!" cried he. "I think they are coming, Sir. It looks quite black between here and the forest."

"Then keep still, all of you. Don't dare to breathe, any of you. Perhaps they'll pass by."

"I don't think so, Sir; they are coming over here. It looks as if they were coming to the house."

"What!" cried the inn-keeper, and sank helpless upon the bench. "All my mortal sins rise before me at once! Are they coming to me? Surely that cannot be possible."

"Whether it is possible or not, I don't know; but here they are already."

In a moment there broke out before the house so sudden and deafening a noise, that it was well fitted to startle the most hardened conscience out of its sleep, and to make the most obdurate nature tremble. With the wild outcry of two hundred rough voices, was mingled the rattling of iron kettles and tin pans, which were struck as kettle-drums; bells jingled and cow-horns brayed, and shot after shot was fired off as if a wild conflict was waged in the night; and over the din, and clatter, and rattle, the clear, penetrating fife sounded shrilly; so that one could well imagine, as the country people said, that hell had let loose a crew of devils, who were celebrating one of those revels which Father Kochem has so edifyingly described in "The Golden Key of Heaven." Over the swaying crowd lay the most complete darkness; a single lantern glimmered in the midst; but on all sides of the house and the place guards were stationed, who, with loaded guns ready cocked, put back every comer, and whose orders no one could have withstood, for it was

well known that they did not hesitate to give, to any one resisting, a bullet instead of a word.

The uproar had at first been expressed only in inarticulate shouts, but gradually defined sounds became audible, intelligible words were heard, and soon there was roared significantly from a hundred throats: "Come out, Franz! come out, girl!" A sharp, clear whistle resounded distinctly over all; then at once the din and noise were changed into funeral silence, and a powerful, deep-toned voice cried out:

"The Haberers are here their sentence to proclaim,
Let those within all motionless remain.
Cover the fires, and extinguish each light,
And none in the house shall be in worse plight.
But in the first place, the roll we must call,
To see if those present comprehend all."

According to the ancient custom, all who were present were summoned, but only under foreign, well-known, or illustrious names, perhaps for the purpose of giving greater dignity to the assembly through the high rank of those who were cited. There were names from the most ancient, as well as from the present times, from the neighborhood as well as from the most

distant lands and places; the Sheriff of Tölz, the Steward of Benedict-beuern, the Forester of Bayerbrunn were cited, and to each name was answered a loud "Here!" The people say that if the "here" was omitted after the calling out of one of the names, the whole proceeding would be unlawful, and the crowd would immediately disperse, without another sound; it was usual, however, to join to this the other saying, that there was always one more present than there were persons summoned, and this one was no other than the devil himself. The Abbot of Weyarn, one of the ancient secular convents, answered the call, then the Prince Eugene, the Emperor Joseph, and the Smith of Kochel, Napoleon, and the Friar of Garching. Last of all the Emperor Karl was cited to be present, and finally to sign the register.

A new outburst of shouts and howling followed, like a grand flourish of hellish music, mingled with a renewed and more determined call for the proscribed girl whom the judgment concerned.

Franzi had long before gone peacefully to her bed-room, had undressed herself, said her prayers, and was just about to extinguish the little piece of consecrated wax-candle, and get into bed, when the uproar broke out. At first she listened, astonished, but she could not long remain in doubt as to what was meant, or for whom it was intended ; although she was for a little while under the impression that she had already been asleep, and been roused out of a wild dream. She could not make out whether she was awake, or still under the influence of the dream. Soon, however, a clear apprehension came to her, and with it a feeling of intense mortification, and of such anguish and complete helplessness that her knees gave way under her. Falling down at the bed-side, she sobbed violently, and pressed her face, down which the tears streamed, deep into the pillows. But sorrow could not long endure in a strong nature like hers. The sting thrust into her soul had penetrated through the exterior to the quick—to the consciousness of innocence and undeserved ignominy ; the thought of which

thrilled her with electric fire, and steeled her heart. Anguish was changed into scorn, and the painful feeling of mortification into burning indignation. She rushed out of her chamber into the corridor, and had in a trice unbolted and torn open the door which led into the little balcony in the gable. She did not feel how the icy night-wind blew around her, and laid hold of her garments and half-loosened hair. She came just in time to hear the executioner begin to read, by the light of a lantern held up for him, the following :

“Against a girl a Haberfeld we hold,
Whose name in the book of guilt is enrolled;
To district and country we now would relate,
How by lies she assumes an honest estate;
No lad would think it, and yet it is true,
She puts her young from her, as the cats do;
She thinks the cuckoo must understand best,
And so, lays her eggs in another one's nest.”

Franzi could no longer restrain herself; there seemed to be a roaring around her like the fall of waters; the blood rushed to her brain, and a crimson veil was drawn before her eyes.

“What do you want with me?” she shouted down, with resounding voice.

The reader of the sentence stopped, aston-

ished. "Is this all you are fit for, to come here a hundredfold against a poor defenseless girl, who has nothing but her honor and her good name? If you have anything against me, come not in the dark night, and with muffled faces; come openly in the clear daylight, and as God has made you. Is there no one among you who has the nerve and heart for that? Then you are all a set of liars and slanderers! I put it on your consciences what you are doing to me; and if there be no more right and justice in the world, then I will accuse you before our Lord God, and you shall answer me at the last day, as unrighteous judges."

Up to this time, astonishment and surprise had kept the Haberers silent, for in the memory of man, no one ever before had the boldness to thus defy the invisible judges, and condemn their sentence. Franzi's words, too, and the manner of her appearance, were not without their effect on some few; but with the greater number, astonishment soon gave place to anger, augmented by the sense of shame, which every one, more or less, felt stealing

over him. The shouting began anew, wilder, more appalling, and more overpowering than ever.

High above the tumult rang Franzi's ineffectual voice.

"Home with you!" she cried. "Away, ye scoundrels! And if might stands for right with you, I too can help myself! Answer me satisfactorily, or I will shoot the first one of you down. I will at least make sure of one of you."

As if beside herself, she sprang back into the passage, tore down the fowling piece of the host from its place on the wall, and was about to return to the balcony; but as she was in the act of cocking the gun, the host, who came rushing up like a madman, to put an end to this unheard-of occurrence, struck her arm from behind. Two of the men-servants came running after him.

"Give me the gun," he cried, struggling with the resisting girl. "This too! Is it not audacity enough for you to defy and revile the Haberers? Must you shoot them too, you ac-

cursed woman? Do you wish them to break in and burn my house to the ground, in their rage? Bolt the balcony door, that those below may see and know that we have nothing to do with this worthless person!"

While the men were doing what they had been ordered, the host thrust Franzi with rude force toward the steps, in order to drag or throw her down if necessary, so that he might avert the dreadful fate which he saw already threatening his house.

"Off—down with you!" he panted. "Out of my honest house! When you are outside, you can revile the Haberers as much as you please; but you sha'n't remain here a quarter of an hour longer."

It was only but too evident that, as Franzi's confusion and emotion increased, her usually clear mind became clouded.

"What, and this too?" she stammered, exhausted with struggling. "Must I go out? In the middle of the night? And why? Because of this infamous mob—because of these slanderers? No, I will not go; you have no

right, landlord, to chase me like a dog out of the house. I am an honest servant."

"Will you argue with me, too?" shrieked the host, while the departing roar of the Habererers, who in the meantime had finished their business and were preparing to leave, sounded into the house. "Do you call yourself an honest servant? You are a wicked woman, a bad mother, who has put away her child. The jail holds better people than you."

A shrill whistle summoned the men from above.

"Go to her room," he continued, "pack up her clothes and things in a bundle; then come down and throw this wicked person out of the door, and her bundle after her! The Inn at the Cross-Roads is a decent house. No one can stay here on whom a Haber court has been held."

To the rough fellows, who probably bore Franzi malice on account of her haughty disposition, such an opportunity to vent their spite was welcome. The bundle was soon packed and tied. They then seized with their

rude hands the girl, who, overcome by the dreadful things that had happened to her, like one bereft of sense, and dreaming, suffered them to do as they liked. She seemed not to know what was going on about her. Tearing her disheveled hair with her hands, Franzi staggered down the steps away into the night. An icy north wind was blowing, which still bore to her ears the distant chorus of the departing Haberers.

Snatching up her bundle, she went on with failing senses, and it was only the keen penetrating chill of the night air that dissipated her faintness, and gradually brought her to a consciousness of her condition.

"Yes, where am I?" cried she, passionately. "What has happened to me? Is all this true, or am I becoming crazy and imagine it? No! no! it is true; my whole misery is true, or I would not have been lying here, in the middle of the night, in the open field; I am ruined; disgraced for life; and he—" she continued, more softly, in a tone of the deepest agony; "and he, also, is among my enemies;

he, too, believes it of me. He can believe it; he is the leader of them all. That is the hardest thing of all. But shall it remain so? Shall I allow this to pass unnoticed, like the wind, which is almost tearing me to pieces?"

She sprang up. "No, I must not," said she, taking courage. "I must not let them oppress and ruin me; they must hear me, and give me my good name again. And now at this very moment, while they are still all together, they must do it. I am still living. I can still act. It is too early yet to despair."

Quickly seizing her bundle, and arranging her storm-tossed hair, she cast a shawl over her head and shoulders, and hurried on. After a time, she stopped to listen to the noise, which was ever growing fainter in the distance.

"They are going to the market," she whispered to herself. "I could not overtake them there, they have too great a start. But they are following the road; if I take the path over the hill and through the beech grove, I will intercept them. They cannot escape me; they must hear me."

As if chased by the wind, which was now blowing upon her back and shoulders, she flew across the wooded hill, then down through the marshy flats, without noticing that her foot seldom touched firm ground, in her hasty flight. At last she reached the rising ground, and hastened, panting, along the narrow strips of grass which formed the boundary between the bare stubble fields, while at her side the branches of the hazel thicket rustled, and swaying, shed their withered leaves. It became gradually lighter, as the moon was rising ; and although it could not pierce through the black, driving storm-clouds, still an uncertain pale light glimmered, like twilight, through the night. Still occupied with her thoughts, frequently murmuring disconnected words in her excitement, she considered how she should address them, what words would be best, and most striking to oppose to the accusation. This caused her involuntarily to stop, less from excitement than from newly occurring thoughts.

She had run swiftly and far ; she l

reached the last ascent of the hill. A stone chapel in the fields appeared to her, with its white walls; from there the path led down to the market below, and there opened the first view of the mountains. The little bench near the chapel, under the two ash-trees, which were now nearly stripped of their leaves, had not only served many devout people, but also many pleasure seekers, who had climbed up there to refresh eye and mind with the inspiring view. The door was ajar. Franzi went in to seek a moment's rest, to collect her thoughts, and to find a protection from the wind, which blew over the open space with redoubled violence and coldness.

She knelt at the altar and crouched before it. A roughly carved image of the Virgin stood upon it, representing her as sitting at the foot of the empty cross, and holding in her lap the body of our Saviour.

"It will not do," she whispered to herself. "I cannot arrange how to address them. I cannot do it without betraying everything, and that I cannot and will not do—I have indeed

As if chased by the wind, which was now blowing upon her back and shoulders, she flew across the wooded hill, then down through the marshy flats, without noticing that her foot seldom touched firm ground, in her hasty flight. At last she reached the rising ground, and hastened, panting, along the narrow strips of grass which formed the boundary between the bare stubble fields, while at her side the branches of the hazel thicket rustled, and swaying, shed their withered leaves. It became gradually lighter, as the moon was rising ; and although it could not pierce through the black, driving storm-clouds, still an uncertain pale light glimmered, like twilight, through the night. Still occupied with her thoughts, frequently murmuring disconnected words in her excitement, she considered how she should address them, what words would be best, and most striking to oppose to the accusation. This caused her involuntarily to stop, less from excitement than from newly occurring thoughts.

She had run swiftly and far ; she had already

reached the last ascent of the hill. A stone chapel in the fields appeared to her, with its white walls; from there the path led down to the market below, and there opened the first view of the mountains. The little bench near the chapel, under the two ash-trees, which were now nearly stripped of their leaves, had not only served many devout people, but also many pleasure seekers, who had climbed up there to refresh eye and mind with the inspiring view. The door was ajar. Franzl went in to seek a moment's rest, to collect her thoughts, and to find a protection from the wind, which blew over the open space with redoubled violence and coldness.

She knelt at the altar and crouched before it. A roughly carved image of the Virgin stood upon it, representing her as sitting at the foot of the empty cross, and holding in her lap the body of our Saviour.

"It will not do," she whispered to herself. "I cannot arrange how to address them. I cannot do it without betraying everything, and that I cannot and will not do—I have indeed

promised." She rubbed her brow as if to call up a helping thought; she then folded her hands resignedly about her weary knees, and looked up through the darkness at the image.

"I think that I must endure it," she said, quietly. "Oh, Holy Mother above, I have so often taken refuge in thee. Thou, indeed, hast also borne much worse. Place thy hand on my poor heart, that I also may bear it."

A noise of approaching steps interrupted her. There was also the sound as if of the rattling of arms. She raised herself to listen. A hand pressed against the door. It did not open, and the voice of a man was heard.

"This is provoking. The chapel stands open day and night through the whole year, and just on this day of all others it is shut. It would be an excellent shelter, for the wind really blows through bone and marrow."

Noiselessly, Franzi groped on tip-toe to the entrance, in order to hear the better, and thanking the accident which had closed the door, that could be opened only from within. Through the narrow crack of the weather-shrunk

door, she perceived the outlines of two gend'armes, who, muffled in their dark cloaks, pressed into the recess at the entrance, in order to find a momentary protection from the storm.

"Luckily the delay will not be long," began one of them again. "If they come at all, they cannot be long."

"I don't know," answered the other, "but it seems to me as if all this waiting were for nothing. The Haberers have indeed too many good friends, who have certainly betrayed to them everything already, and they will not come at all."

Franzi listened breathlessly, with ever-increasing intensity.

"At any other time it might have been so," began the first again, "but this time we have been too sly for them. There is only a single man who knows of it who could betray it, and he will not be let loose till all is over."

"And who is he?"

"The same one from whom we have learned everything, the rag-picker Alisi."

"That ragamuffin?" cried the other, con-

temptuously. "If the information comes from him, it is not worth much. That Alisi is a regular scamp, on whom a Haber court has already been held. The Haberers are not usually so stupid, and they say that only decent men and lads are admitted among them. I can't comprehend how they would let such a fellow see the cards, so that he could betray anything."

"I don't believe that either," was the answer, "but it is certain that he knows about it; how he could have learned it, heaven only knows. The Brigadier-General discovered him, day before yesterday, at the new inn, where he had been for two days without going to bed, and was still intoxicated. This struck the Brigadier, and he questioned him, and searched him, but he could get nothing connected out of him. Why, he had a handful of double-florins in his pocket; how could the fellow have come by so much money if he did not get it from the Haberers to do their spying. He gave no satisfactory answer, and made out that he was crazy; and it was only when he learned that he was going to be imprisoned, that his tongue

loosened a little. He acted quite wildly, and wanted by all means to be let go, for he wished to be present; he must see how those who had trampled him under foot, would be served out. From his confused speech and half-words, they drew out that the plot was this time against the Herr Bailiff."

"Infamous rabble!"

"Well, this time they will get their deserts! The Bailiff is not the man to be trifled with. He has silently ordered up the troops from the nearest stations, has armed the police, and called out the citizen guards. If they really dare to come, they will be permitted quietly to advance, till they are in the space near the castle, where alone they can approach in a body; there they will be surrounded on all sides, like a mouse in a trap, or a deer in a net. It will only be necessary to close in upon them."

"I am glad of it," cried the other, as he bent forward over the wall. "I have long had a grudge against these peasants, who now wish to play the master everywhere; I am ready, if an opportunity is given, to have a stroke at

them. But hark ! something approaches the market from that direction ; something black is coming out of that thicket. It is they, they are really coming. We will go back and give the information."

Franzi stood as if petrified in her place of concealment, until the last sound of the footsteps had died away in the distance ; then she quickly opened the door, and stepped, breathing heavily, into the open air. On the threshold she turned around again and cried, as if praying, her hands folded over her heart :

"Again I have not come in vain to thee, Holy Mother ; you have taken the wrath out of my heart, and the confusion. To-morrow I will go early into the city, and if I cannot there, yet somewhere in the world I will find a place where no one knows me and my disgrace, where I can conceal myself, and where sometime or other the happy hour will strike when all will be brought to light. Until then I will bear it patiently, as thou dost thy sad burden. I will, like thee, take my dead love in my arms, and press it to my heart ; I will

carry out my purpose ; I will endure what I have undertaken. Now I know what I have to do ! ”

She glided crouchingly along the path that led beside the hedge, until she reached the neighborhood of a castle-like building, which was the residence of the Bailiff. A high wall surrounded it, and ran down to a ravine, to which the path led ; on the opposite side was an open country, inclosed at a little distance by woods and orchards. On all sides pickets were posted. Over the wall the Bailiff was speaking to some one who had brought further information ; which was, that the Haberers had halted on the other side of the square, in order to administer a reproof to the rich Meister Staudinger, whose residence stood apart, because he had been detected in killing and selling diseased cattle.

“ Well, I think this disorder will take place to-day for the last time,” said the Bailiff “ These rebels, these peace-breakers, deserve no forbearance. I have resolved to put an end to the matter, and I will carry it through even if

I have to proclaim martial law! Go, all of you, to your appointed places, and do exactly what I have ordered you."

The tumult of the Haberers was heard more loudly. The Bailiff looked out of a window in the first story, at which the figure of a woman was visible, wrapped closely in furs.

"Only listen to this infernal howling," said he. "These modern Vehmrichters go very loudly to work; what do you say, ma mie?"

"That it is tedious," answered the lady; "the affair is simply vulgar. Entirely without romance. It gives me cold, and is not worth the influenza I might catch." She closed the window and disappeared.

In terror Franzi had hid in the thicket at the corner of the wall. She could not move without betraying herself by the rustling of the boughs. Now at last, as all went off, it was possible for her to pursue her way. She seized the branches of an overhanging white-thorn-bush, without noticing the thorns which pierced her bleeding hands; hanging on by these, she succeeded in lowering herself down

into the moat, where the remains of an early fortification still ran along the rear of the castle. Following this by a circuitous way, she reached the outer houses of the market place.

She came just at the right moment; the ranks of the Haberers were already moving down the hill. In spite of the distance and the dim light, she immediately detected with her quick eyes the object of her search. Even had she not known who the Habermeister was, his high towering form would have revealed him to her at once.

He marched alone, somewhat in advance of the rest, while the van guard and the scouts were also separated by various intervals. His gait was not as firm and his demeanor as composed as usual; he often stopped for a moment, like one who tries to recollect something forgotten, and hesitated whether he would return to get it; then he strode on again more quickly than ever, as if urged forward by haste and restlessness.

The occurrence at the Cross-Roads had taken

a strong hold upon Sixt, and had greatly excited him. Although grieved at heart, yet he had gone there with the firm determination to execute his sad office against the companion of his youth, for whom a remnant of his old affection still pleaded, however angry with himself on that account he might become, and however diligently he sought to root that tender little plant from his heart, as if it were an everspringing noxious weed. What should he now think of that which had occurred before? How could he reconcile these two things: his indignant displeasure, and that meddling monitor which always replied to him gentle words of excuse? Was it conceivable that any one with a sin-laden conscience could so meet the accuser? Was it possible that a guilty person could feign so naturally the voice and tone of innocence, the manner of just indignation, and of virtuous emotion? And yet it must be true. It could not be otherwise. The accusation was too explicit; the proof, in connection with the universal report, with the various indications, and also

with the mysterious behavior of the girl, was too clear and irrefutable for a reasonable doubt on the subject to exist. Had not his own brother, who, as well as himself, had been the companion of her youth, the playfellow of her childhood, had not he brought this heavy charge against her? His brother, indeed, had a reserved disposition, very different from his own, which was not pleasant to him, and had estranged them from each other; but he could not be so wicked, such a hypocritical villain, as purposely to give false testimony in regard to the matter, or to bring others to do so. Sooner or later the truth must come to light, and then he who had stood surety for the accusation with life and limb, with goods and blood, with honor and arms, would be obliged to bear the retribution and vengeance of the court, which he had misled into the condemnation of an innocent person.

In such doubts and waverings, and still endeavoring to arouse his faintly-burning anger into new flame, he strode along. There was a slight rustling in the bushes beside him, an

arm was raised from out the bushes, and a hand motioned him to stand still.

"Stop!" was called to him, in a subdued tone, "go no further, Habermiester; you are betrayed!"

"Who is there?" replied he.

"Do not ask, for that makes no difference; but do not go a step further. You are going into a trap."

"It is unnecessary to tell your name," replied he, all his restrained and struggling anger flashing up in him again; "the voice I recognize as well as yourself, even though you disguise it, but I trust it as little as yourself. Do you think, because you are bold enough to deny it, that the matter will end in that way? Whoever was capable of that crime, could also do this. What brings you again in my path? I have nothing to do with you; and if I am betrayed, I have no fear for myself, and do not wish to know it from you! And if I go hence even to my death, I would not turn back if I had to thank you for it! I will go my way by myself, and if

you wish to do me a favor, do not cross my path again."

The troop of Haberers came following after, and with them he hurried on toward the castle, through the narrow pass.

The bushes had closed again. She who had given the warning, sank down within, entirely unobserved. Again the same feeling came over her, as a few hours before, when she stood on the balcony of the Inn at the Cross-Roads. She involuntarily clasped her brow, as if she would seize and hold quiet the tumultuous thoughts and fancies which, as heralds of approaching insanity, danced madly together within her brain.

"He is right, perfectly right," murmured she, "to cast me from him; and indeed I have not the courage to speak right out to him when he is so angry, and yet I cannot escape—I cannot; that is the misfortune."

Meanwhile the troop marched through the narrow pass, where the scouts had perceived nothing suspicious, and began to spread out noiselessly on the level space at the castle

walls. The last men were just approaching, when suddenly from all sides was hailed to them: "Halt!" "Back!" and "Who goes there?" Everywhere behind them dark figures emerged, and rows of leveled gun-barrels gleamed against them.

For a moment perfect silence reigned. The surprised troop crowded together in confusion.

"Answer, or we fire," was again hailed. "Who goes there?"

"Kaiser Karl and the Haber court," replied the Meister, aloud. "Who dares challenge it?"

"He who has a right!" sounded back. "There is no Kaiser and no Haber court in the land. Surrender, you peace breakers; you are surrounded."

"We also have a right," began the Habermmeister again, "and one which is almost as old as our mountains; and so I assert. Disperse, whoever you are who stand in our way! Give free way to the Haber court."

He could not say more. A hot-blooded fellow, to whom the parley seemed too long, by

accident or through awkwardness, pressed the trigger of his gun, and from among the crowd of Haberers rang out a shot at the enemy.

Instantly, half-a-dozen guns were discharged by the latter. The bullets from these quick, aimless shots, went whistling through the leaves of the trees, but two outcries showed that all had not been fired without effect. The result of the volley was decisive; for it entirely surprised the unprepared peasants, and disheartened them so that it was impossible to discover the number of their opponents, or the real extent of the danger. Although most of them were quite ready to take part in a night march, which seemed to them entirely free from danger, yet neither their courage nor inclination went so far as to fight a regular battle in a dark night, with opponents probably far superior to them, and not likely to give quarter. Without awaiting the word of command or any signal, of their own accord, the troop, before so confident, dispersed, and in a few minutes the space toward the woods was covered with dark-fleeing figures; for it was not diffi-

cult at the first rush, by the force of the shock, to break through the line of the opponents, and to obtain a way of retreat. Behind the fugitives pressed on the pursuers, eagerly endeavoring to overtake some one of the wrong-doers, ere the sheltering forest received them. A few minutes served for the complete dispersal of the Haberers, and only here and there single shots flashed and sounded out through the night.

Almost the only one who remained in his unsheltered position and watched the flight of his companions with shame and anger, was the Habermester. In vain had his voice, in suppressed tones, summoned them to stop, to fall into ranks, and at least to preserve the honor of an orderly retreat. They paid no regard to him. His own attention and energies also had been fully demanded by an event in his immediate vicinity. He had taken his stand at one side of the level space, upon a slight elevation, under a lofty cherry-tree, where he could see as well as be seen. A few paces from him a bullet had struck one of the fugitives, who

with a shrill cry sprang up, and then reeling and staggering, fell almost at Sixt's feet.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed the Habermmeister. "What is that? Indeed, that voice I ought to know. Forester, can that be you? How came you here among the Haberers?"

"It is I," groaned the wounded man, while he raised his hands to his face streaming with blood. "Oh! Oh! my eyes! I am blind. I am wounded to death. Oh, Sixt! Brother, do not leave me."

Sixt cast a quick glance around him. The armed men on all sides had turned back from the useless pursuit, and began to wander over the scene of the conflict. In a few minutes they would come upon him. A spasm seized his heart at the thought, but the die was cast, and he must abide by it. He could not leave his wounded brother thus, in the very agony of death.

"Be quiet, forester," said he. "I will not leave you. Perhaps your wound is not so dangerous as you think. I will try to raise you on my back and carry you away."

"Oh, oh," lamented the wounded man, "it is too late. There is no help for me now, no cure. I must die, brother. I feel that death is already drawing near."

Irresolutely the Habermmeister was bending down to the prostrate man, whose mind began to wander from the violence of the pain, when a woman's figure glided from behind the tree and pressed between them.

"You? You so soon again?" exclaimed he, staggering backward.

"Do not think now about who it is," answered the girl, "but try to escape; they will be here in a moment; the path down to the large pear-tree is still clear."

"Shall I leave my brother in this condition?" asked he, still scarcely trusting his eyes.

"I fear we can help him no more; but I will do all that can be done for him. I will stay with him. Only make your escape before it is too late."

"And is it you, again, who wish to save me?" exclaimed he, painfully agitated. "You, Franzi, to-day, after all I have done to you?"

“Do not be obstinate because of that, Sixt,” answered she, hastily. “It is not on your account that I do it, and I will certainly never again cross your path. I only do it on account of your father and mother, and of all the love and kindness they showed me ; but now go !—go !”

“No! I will not go,” said he, with great emotion.

“Well then, stay,” said she, painfully excited ; “stay and let yourself be captured. Let them take you and discover the Habermmeister in you—in you, the Oak Farmer, Sixt, to whom all have looked up in such respect—who has been so proud of his irreproachable name and character. Let yourself be fettered like a criminal, and tried like one, and bring on yourself a heavy, heavy punishment, so that your honest-hearted parents may turn in their graves from sorrow, shame, and contempt !”

A moment longer he wavered, while his flashing eyes were fixed keenly, and with an indescribable expression, upon the girl ; then quickly and firmly he seized her hand, pressed

it in farewell, and the next moment vanished among the bushes.

It was high time for him to be gone, for directly afterward the pursuers began to collect in this direction.

Franzi knelt down beside the forester, whose deep, labored breathing showed that the vail of unconsciousness was again about to fall upon his senses. The bullet had struck his temple, and piercing the skull, had destroyed both eyes. There was nothing that could be done for him, and no hope. The unfortunate man had not been able to forego the pleasure of seeing his revenge fully sated, and had secretly mingled with the Haberers at the Cross-Roads, and had also presumptuously joined in the expedition ; so retribution overtook him among the first that fled.

"Sixt," stammered he, coming to himself, "where are you? Have you, too, left me, brother?"

"I am here in his place," said Franzi, gently and softly ; but though the tone sounded so gentle, yet its effect upon the wounded man

was as if he had heard the trumpet-call of the judgment day. Shocked and shattered by pain, he strove to raise himself, but could not. He made a motion toward his face, as if to aid his sight, but his injured eyes refused their office.

"Who?" exclaimed he, almost screaming. "Franzi? Oh, what pain this is! I die, I must die; and you—you are the only one who remains with me!"

"Why should I not? Only compose yourself; I will try to take you away."

"Too late," groaned he. "It is over with me—all over. I must die. Now I am sure of that. Oh, eternal justice! Retribution! Retribution! Go away from me, Franzi; leave me alone; you don't know what I've done to you."

"Do not worry yourself about me," said she, soothingly. "If you feel so wretched, think of yourself and of your poor soul. Pray, forester, pray!"

"Pray!" said he, in an indistinct manner. "Yes, yes, pray. I have prayed so often in my

life, and have so often been in earnest about it. And now, now, Oh thou, my crucified Saviour—”

He ceased; a blood-vessel in his shattered head had broken, and a violent hemorrhage, pouring down, suffocated him.

For a little while Franzi remained kneeling beside him, praying softly. “He has run his course,” said she then, rising up. “He has no more need of any one in this world. I also can go away; it would be best that they should find no one beside him, for that would put an end to all questionings.” She stooped down, and picking up from the grass a dry fallen branch, broke it into two unequal portions, and bound them together in the form of a cross; then she folded the dead man’s arms upon his breast, and put the cross into his bands. “He has been gathered to his fathers unto eternity, and may our Lord God deal graciously with him!”

She glided away.

Beside some fragments of clothing and broken weapons, the authorities found nothing but this bloody, mangled corpse.

“Curse it,” muttered the Bailiff, stamping with passion, “such an excellent opportunity, and all in vain! I had counted certainly upon getting the ring-leader into my power, but, nevertheless, my suspicions did not deceive me. I know where the head of the reptile is, and will not rest until it is crushed.”

CHAPTER V.

THE late October sun had already mounted high toward noon over the Inn at the Cross-Roads; but upon the short, yellow grass, and upon the brown, seared stubble, the sparkling hoarfrost hung heavily; and only on the east side, where the sun's rays had been acting upon it for a longer time, had it began to melt, and thaw down in brilliant drops from the dark branches of the fir-trees. The heavens were arched above in autumnal blue, clear and cloudless, for a keen east wind dissipated the vapor which was about to form into a cloud. In the distance, beyond the crossing of the roads, where an alley in the woods opened a clear vista, the outline of a lofty mountain loomed up, widely overspread with a glittering snow mantle; and its blue shadows, like the folds of a royal robe, spread over it a veil of still greater richness and splendor. The late

autumn had given a vigorous warning, and a severe winter was expected soon to follow on its footsteps.

Nevertheless, at the Cross-Roads it was bustling and lively again, for its location made the Inn a very suitable gathering-place for the neighboring population. Excellent roads leading in four directions made communication with it short and easy, and formed at their crossing a central point, easily accessible from the many villages and districts lying all around, without requiring the inhabitants of one to make a longer journey than those of another. But at this time the company had collected inside the house, and were crowded together in the public room like ants in their hills, or bees in their hive when preparing to swarm.

Only one person, in spite of the coolness of the weather, preferred to remain out of doors, rather than inhale the damp, steamy air of the room; that was the schoolmaster of Osterbrunn. He strolled slowly along the garden-hedge and examined the tops of the apple-trees reaching above, and the numerous little plum-

trees humbly raising their heads below, and observed with regret how many fruit-buds of the former were nipped by the frost, and how much the latter needed a careful hand to free them from the overgrowing moss and the brown lichen leaves. In the course of his walk he came to the corner, near the steps at the entrance, which was warmed by the sun, and protected from the wind also. He brought out his beer tankard, and having lighted his pipe, watched the smoke-rings which curled up into the pure autumn air, only to be blown away. At first his countenance showed his pleasure in this occupation, but gradually it became gloomy; for to the pleasure of observing the rings and varied figures of the smoke-clouds, was soon added the perception of their perishable character; and thus his pipe had well-nigh gone out.

An exclamation and greeting awoke him from this meditative mood; the old peasant with the white moustache had been attending to his horses, and was just coming from the stable.

"God bless you, Herr Schoolmaster!" exclaimed he, "so you are here once more, are you? Is it not too cold for you out of doors?"

"I have been taking a walk about the country," answered the schoolmaster. "In two days the school begins again, and I wanted first to look once more at all the gardens and trees about which I care anything, and to see wherein the owners may need some good advice. There are very many little shoots that one ought to tie up before cold weather, or make an inclosure of hedge-thorn about them, lest during the winter the dainty hare might come and nibble the bark off. It seems as if winter would come early this year; it may grow cold and snow during the night."

"Yes, yes, it is wonderful," said the peasant, "how things go, and how often something suddenly happens which no one ever thought about. When I think," continued he, looking thoughtfully about him, "that it is not yet four full weeks since we met, and were sitting beside each other, I can hardly believe it possible—yet you know, Herr Schoolmaster, it was on this

very same day that the forest survey was to have been held about the Westerbrunn disputed boundary. How much has happened since then, and how things have changed. Franzi has had a visit from the Haberfelders, to which in the meanwhile she had rendered herself liable. She has been hunted away from here with shame and disgrace, and since then no one knows where she has gone."

The schoolmaster's pipe had actually grown cold.

"And is that indeed true?" said he, shaking his head. "Has no one heard anything of her?"

"Not an earthly word. Some think she has gone out of the country; but others that she has made away with herself in her desperation. Good Heavens! that last may not be improbable, for things have gone hard enough with her. But who would have believed it, that she who could behave so well, could be such a bad person!"

"Still I do not yet believe it," said the schoolmaster, thoughtfully. "I have already learnt

by experience that a wild-stock which has been grafted two or three times successively, may not improve, and may remain a wild-stock as before ; but when once you have a tree of a good kind, it may be destroyed, but it cannot degenerate, and all at once begin to bear wood apples."

"Yes, yes, that you should understand best, Herr Schoolmaster," nodded the peasant, in assent. "I should rejoice if you were right ; but since the Haberfeld has been executed against her, I fear she may never get rid of the effect of it all her life. One is sometimes very much deceived in people. What a steady, God-fearing man Herr Forester seemed to be ! Who would have thought it possible that he was among the Haberers, and would die under a hedge, without confession and absolution ! And that is not all yet ! There was also Herr Staudinger, too, the stout cattle dealer, who always had a grudge against Franzi ; and Alisi, the rag-picker—but in his case, indeed, it was properly done !"

"What is the matter with these last two ?" asked the schoolmaster.

"Do you not know that?" exclaimed the old man in astonishment. "Against Herr Staudinger the Haberfeld has also been executed—the man who just a little while ago jeered at us and called us stupid peasants. Yes, we were not very sharp, that we let the flesh of cattle that had died, be chopped up into sausages, and ate it as good! The miserable fellow—but he has got his deserts, and is up and away! He has left his house and everything behind him just as they were, and will not venture here again all his life!"

"Probably what happened before, shook his courage; but then, indeed, the Haberfeld has accomplished some good," said the schoolmaster.

The peasant laughed and scratched his head.

"I hardly think that," said he; "a little bit of fright would not have so much effect on him. It would require a small earthquake! I could sooner believe that the rag-picker, Alisi, had come to his senses again, and was behaving himself, though indeed it does not look like that now! They have put him under bolts

and bars, because he has become perfectly crazy, and absolutely wishes to recover his property, which is now to be offered again at auction."

"I do not see anything crazy in that."

"Perhaps not, Herr; but they found ever so much gold on him, and he cannot show where he got it; but that he received it as a present, as he says, no one believes. They think he has stolen it from some place, or has robbed some one; so they have taken the money from him and put him in prison, and consequently he has become perfectly crazy. He has been half so for some time."

An increasing noise from the public-room interrupted the old man's stream of conversation.

"They are moving their chairs," said the schoolmaster; "they seem to have finished the election of overseer."

"Very likely," answered the peasant, "and there comes Herr Bailiff's servant to harness up the horses. They are actually ready. Yes, the Westerbrunnens probably have had an easy

time of it ; they have just chosen the old Finkenzeller again. The mouse gnaws no threads. But how will it be with us Osterbrunners ? You know that in eight days will come the election of our overseer."

"Is that so ? I did not know it. Herr Bailiff has taken care that I should have nothing more to do with that. He has all the minutes written by his secretary."

The old man looked cautiously about him, and discovering no one near, continued in a low tone :

"Yes, yes, Herr Bailiff does not let himself be called one of the strict sort to no purpose ; but if you will not betray me, Herr Schoolmaster, I will tell you some news. Things will never again be so sure and certain with him as at first. The report concerning the forest compromise, and the Haberfeld too, has given great offense to the Government officials ; and it is said, indeed, they will send a commissioner, who will inquire into and examine everything on the spot. There he comes now," he exclaimed, breaking off. "He has been in a

great hurry to-day. I will slip into the house, that I may not meet him, for he does not speak kindly to us Osterbrunners, because of the deputation."

He would have returned to the house, but was already too late, and had to remain where he was, for the Bailiff had come down the steps, wearing his military cap, and wrapped in a mantle of splendid marten fur, over which the embroidered collar of his official coat appeared. Behind him walked his secretary with a bundle of documents under his arm, and his hat on, while they were followed by the people of the Westerbrunn community, being the center of a large circle of them with uncovered heads.

Just at this moment a peasant of large stature hurried from the road toward the house, with head bent down in thought so that he did not become aware of their presence until he was standing almost in front of them; and they also were so much occupied with the departure of the great official, that they did not observe him. The Bailiff had come down

while the coachman was very busy in fastening the traces to the carriage. The landlord, springing forward, had opened the carriage-door, and now stood near-by with submissive manner, holding his hat crushed under his arm.

"Your worship has made unusual haste to-day," said he, with a low bow. "I shall never cease to regret that I am not honored beyond mid-day."

"It is not proper, Herr Landlord," replied the Bailiff, coldly. "The court officials cannot stay longer than is absolutely necessary in a house where such dubious matters have happened. You will have to try and make amends, and restore the good name of your house; and you can only do this by discovering the instigator and participator in this shameful disorder which has taken place at your house."

"But how shall I?" stammered the confused landlord.

"That is your business, my dear fellow, not mine," responded the official, glancing his eye casually over the crowd around him. He noticed the last comer, but did not betray it by

the slightest token, not even by the quiver of his eye. In a very quiet tone he continued, turning half round to the Westerbrunners: "The officer can only give an intimation to serve as a guide, if you choose to be guided. The accomplishment in these times of self-government must be left to the subjects—shall I say, to those belonging to the State. It is always right and proper to be guided. You men of Westerbrunn will experience that, because you have followed my intimations to you, and have chosen that man for overseer who seems to the authorities to be the most proper person! You stand in the middle of the forest, and, so to speak, do not see beyond the trees. You see the roots and the trunks apparently sound. But the authorities stand above you, on an eminence, and from a distance see when a tree begins to grow dry at the top. I recognize some of the Osterbrunners among you. In eight days their turn comes to hold an election, and I sincerely hope they will give me the opportunity of bestowing on them praise for like good behavior. The choice of an over-

seer is undoubtedly one of the most important and decisive events in the history of the community. An entirely irreproachable and blameless character before everything else, is requisite in a man to whose hands, in this post of honor, the weal or woe, and the honor of a whole community are to be committed. You certainly agree with me in this, Herr Aicher of the Oaks," continued he, suddenly turning to the new comer, as if he had then noticed him for the first time. "You have not been seen for some time—at least not lately—though that is easily accounted for. During that time you have had some sad experiences in your family, about which I cannot forbear condoling sincerely with you."

"I thank you very much for your sympathy, Herr Baron," replied Sixt, shortly and gloomily. "My brother's death has of course grieved me very much."

"Very naturally! Especially under such strange and mysterious circumstances!" continued the Bailiff, in a tone of warm sympathy. "And in addition to that, all the other

inexplicable events! The mysterious disappearance of your foster-sister, against whom the crime of child-desertion has begun to be generally charged! How painfully all these things must have affected you! I knew indeed upon what intimate footing you stood with her! Have you no clue to the missing one?"

Everything swam before Sixt's eyes. He trembled with the fierce desire to repel these half-concealed, malicious charges, which he felt like the thrusts of a dagger; but observing the place and circumstances, he mastered himself.

"None," answered he, composedly, "although I have spared neither time, trouble, nor expense."

"Oh! that I believe of you without your affirming it," said the official again. "Be assured, too, of my most active co-operation, and mark in this a striking instance of how seldom the vaunted innovations of our day really accomplish what they promise. If all the threads were gathered in one hand as before, it would be mere child's play to lift the veil which lies

over all these occurrences, and to find out the connection which undoubtedly exists between them. Since the fatal separation of the administration of justice from the executive power, each one exerts himself in vain in his own sphere. There is wanting that effective co-operation and mutual comprehension. But indeed, under the present circumstances, I will show you how great an interest I take in such a man, and in such a family. I expect soon to show you the origin of the deserted child at the Manor Farm, and to assist you in making acquaintance with the new Habermeister, under whose administration this lovely institution has had such a new and beautiful development. Probably in the eight days before the new election of the overseer, I may be in a position to give you some very interesting particulars concerning it."

While speaking these last words, he had got into the carriage, and seated himself comfortably; then he bowed again, condescendingly, touched his hat slightly, and signed to the coachman to drive on. Soon he was

whirled past the crossing, and had disappeared in the forest. But the peasants still stood there without moving, looking at each other in astonishment, and forgot to put on their hats, although the wind blew so coldly on their heads. Then gradually they recollected themselves, and went thoughtfully back to the public room.

For a short time longer Sixt stood alone, as if stunned by a thunderbolt which had fallen upon his head, and forgetting the purpose which brought him here.

"He has undertaken it," murmured he, grinding his teeth. "He wishes to ruin me, and I see it coming; he will not rest until he has accomplished his purpose! See here, Herr Schoolmaster," said he, in his usual manner, as the latter approached him, sympathizingly. "You come just at the right time; you have often told me you had some regard for me."

The schoolmaster grasped his hand and shook it. "I should think," said he, "there was no necessity for me to prove that to you for the first time now. But I am ready, if an

old nurseryman's advice can be of any service to you. What do you need—a remedy for caterpillars, who eat off the leaf-crowns, and the buds also, or for the worm which bores through the rind, the bark, and the wood, even to the core?"

"Both, both!" exclaimed Sixt; "advise me how to find the remedy, and I give you my word the tree and its fruit shall rejoice you. Come with me, let us go through the forest as far as the mill, there my wagon awaits me! At all events we will not give up as soon as people imagine."

The first of November and All Saints Day had come, bringing with it again the annual festival in honor of the dead, which was probably celebrated nowhere so universally and with such solemnity as in the city of Munich. The heavens were covered with a deep gray, as if they too should display the signs of mourning. The atmosphere was calm and mild, and with the dry roads, tended to increase the

number of those who were going in streams to the large church-yard—many with hearts full of loving thoughts, and eyes glistening with the reflected light of memory, but the most of them because the custom of the day required it, and because the press and crowd afforded as good a show and pastime as any other more secular festivity. The nearer the crowd approached the church-yard, the more closely was the street lined with large and small booths and stalls, which offered for sale all kinds of grave ornaments, from the smallest circlets made of gray moss, and ornamented with artificial roses, to the most gorgeous wreaths of flowers, which would have done honor to the pencil of an artist; from stately memorials of stone, graven with urns, columns, and monuments, to the simple wooden cross, painted black, and with some sacred picture pasted on it. But within the extensive boundary walls the saddening grave-mounds and tombstones exhibited all the ornaments which thoughtful love, rich splendor, or gaudy want of taste could invent. While the graves of

the poorer people were content if the freshly-raked earth were surrounded by a circle of evergreen, and had a motto and a cross of china-aster flowers, or berries of the mountain-ash, laid upon them; the graves of the rich were transformed into gorgeous gardens, and many a conservatory was stripped to cover the abode of the dead with flowers, leafy plants, and rare shrubs. Around cross and stone clung wreaths and garlands, here formed of the most costly flowers, doubly rare at this season of the year, and almost too beautiful for such perishable adornment; there with economic intent, composed of the enduring immortelle, or sometimes indeed of painted tin, thus uniting durability with ornament. Among them, mourning vails and black ribbons fluttered and rustled, and dim lamps were shining through tinted glasses; and when these last were wanting, you seldom failed to find lights and vessels of holy water, which are burnt and sprinkled for the consolation of those poor souls to whose memory this day is dedicated. Old gray-haired women and invalids,

unfit for other work, were engaged in guarding the graves and ornaments during the day, and in maintaining constant prayers for the "faithful," who had probably still to suffer and do penance in the fiery torments of purgatory.

On one side only of this large field of death, were there fewer tokens of the festival; here the crowd of visitors passed carelessly by, and only occasionally the foot of some solitary person wandered among the half-sunken, grass-grown hillocks. Only here and there appeared an enduring memorial stone, and only upon some few mounds were there even half-decayed wooden crosses. Upon one of these a tablet was fastened, which proclaimed that this memorial was only temporary, and should stand only "until the erection of a monument;" but perhaps the relatives themselves had soon unexpectedly followed the deceased, or, healed by the lapse of time, had forgotten their purpose with their pain. The black tablet still stood there, with its promise, but the monument was unbuilt. It was the portion of the grave-yard which, having been filled for many

years, was now destined to be dug over again, and to be planted with new graves.

On one side of the path, beside some beautifully adorned graves, sat two women who guarded them, and mumbling diligently, told the black beads of the rosaries in their hands ; but this did not prevent their keeping an observant eye upon all that was going on around them, and interspersing their devotions many a time with little remarks.

“ ‘Give us this day our daily bread’—See ! ” said one, “ there he comes again, the stout old man—there he stands, by the iron railing, at the side entrance, and looks about him as if he were waiting for something.”

“ He is old, indeed,” replied the other, glancing over to the entrance, “ but he is not stout ; his clothes hang about his body as if they were on a clothes-prop. Who is he, and what does he want ? ”

“ Who he is, I do not know ; but he was here already this morning, and was examining all about. He was looking for some grave in the cholera times.”

“Most of the graves of that time lie about here in this neighborhood! Goodness, how spitefully the man peers in here, and how he staggers; he would not be very far wrong if he were looking about for some place for himself soon.”

The remarks of the two old women were well founded; and whoever had observed the man so fallen away, as he leaned against the iron grating in order to give a little rest to his weary, aching limbs, would surely have had difficulty in recognizing in him the robust Meister Staudinger, who but a few weeks before was as sound to the core as a tree in the forest. But as with the tree, so a single night had killed the foliage with its frost, and there in the morning it stood with faded, withered leaves instead of green ones, and waiting only for a light breath of air to make them fall to the ground. That had been the night of the Haberfeld. The alarm had surprised him in his warm bed and in deep sleep, amid all his comforts, careless and over-confident. Terror had suddenly seized on him, anguish had

hunted him forth into the cold windy night with but scant covering, for he feared that the avengers would not be satisfied with having reproved and outlawed him. He saw them pressing up to the house, and in his confusion he already heard the doors crash as they were broken in, and he fled. Since that time he had been afflicted with excruciating pains; the fright and the cold had penetrated his very bones, so that in a few days he was reduced to a skeleton. He was filled with suppressed rage at what had happened to him, and with a feeling of inability to obtain his only satisfaction—revenge. With the strength of his body, despite his struggles against it, his hard, defiant spirit gradually broke, as the snow becomes soft long before the vernal sun succeeds in melting it. No matter how much he tried to hide behind the clouds of his anger, he could not prevent the heavens becoming clear all at once over him; and although as formerly he still dreamed, upon his bed of suffering, of enterprises which he thought could yet be carried out; although in the midst of his swear-

ing and cursing, he longed for the spring, that then he might find health in warm baths ; yet it was these very moments which forced him, in spite of himself, to gaze back upon the years which lay behind him, which he thought were long ago buried, and the recollections of which were constantly rising in him like prickly weeds out of the ruins of a fallen building.

Immovable and with gestures of impatient expectation, he was now looking down the little street which led to the side entrance of the grave-yard. He did not notice the hasty steps which sounded loud behind him. A maiden in the dress of the highlands, came quickly down the principal way carrying a little bundle, which felt not light even in the hands of this dweller in the mountains, who was now seeking the city.

It was Franz. She was unchanged. Over her pleasant face a higher color was suffused ; the evidence of an excitement, joyful yet not free from pain. Her searching eye was fixed intently on the half-neglected field of graves.

A man in a shabby jacket and coarse apron, an old felt hat full of holes on his gray head, and a shovel on his shoulder, stepped slowly behind her.

"If you run so, maiden," said he, good-naturedly, "it won't do any good, for you must wait till I come up. Are you really in such a hurry?"

Without turning her gaze from the object of her longing, she stopped, and the grave-digger stepped to her side.

"Here we are," said he, and jumping over the low inclosure, he strode between the hillocks within. "Third section, fourth row, the fifteenth grave. Here, this little mound must be it."

He pointed to an insignificant little hillock, irregularly formed of coarse gravel and earth, which had almost been leveled by time. Matted weeds had fixed their roots in it; some long-bearded and withered rushes hung nodding over it; a blue scabiosa, the seed of which a bird had probably dropped among the graves as he nestled in the rose-bushes, waved its soli-

tary head as if drunk with sleep. As if impelled by a higher power, Franzi sank on both knees to the ground. She spoke not, she wept not, she held her hands before her, and bending down, grasped the stones and earth, as if she wished to press them to her heart.

"What are you doing, maiden?" said the grave-digger. "If you wish to have the grave fixed up, it can hardly be done with your hands."

Franzi remained stunned and immovable. He interrupted her no more, for he then saw in what deep anguish the girl was. He had heart enough to leave her alone for a while, and to annoy her no more. Franzi's wordless soliloquy was intelligible to him alone to whom it was addressed.

"That will do, maiden," began the man, after a little while. "Compose yourself, and remember that what the earth has once got, it never gives back. Say rather what you will have, that it may be done at once. Do you wish to have the grave fixed up and adorned?"

"Yes, yes," answered Franzi, returning to

herself, and rising impulsively. "The grave shall be fixed up and adorned as beautifully as can be done. I am a stranger in the city, grave-digger; will you be so kind as to let me know where I can get what we need. I will pay for it. I have money. It's not too much for me."

"Don't take out your money," said the grave-digger, while with good-natured smile he observed how Franzi drew forth a red handkerchief, tied together at the four corners, and showed the contents rich in silver coin. "I have already seen that you have money. I noticed it when you were with the superintendent, for otherwise you would not have bought the grave! And you have come just at the right time. In a couple of days the fifteen years will be out; for every fifteen years the division is always changed and new graves made."

"But now this is mine," cried Franzi, hastily. "The grave won't be disturbed now."

"Not even by a little finger. The grave is yours now, girl, and you have paid dear enough

for it; now you are the mistress of it for the next fifteen years, and no one can disturb it."

"That is all right," answered Franzi; "now show me where the things for adorning the grave can be bought, and I must also have a beautiful iron cross, with a gilt Christ on it, and with a fine inscription about the resurrection, and the meeting again in eternity."

"That is all to be had for money and good words," said the grave-digger; "come now, my girl, I will show you. I am very much pleased that you love your dead so much, and give your money to do them honor! Who is it who lies there in the grave? You have certainly had a lover who was obliged to become a soldier, and never came home again. Yes, yes, the city takes many a one, and often the very handsomest fellows as well as the very strongest."

Chattering thus he strode on before her, and did not observe that Franzi did not follow, or listen to him. The two grave-watchers observed her liberality and well-filled pocket-handkerchief, and they did not wish to lose

this good opportunity to make a little extra money.

"Will not the young lady have her grave watched?" said one of them, stepping up to her. "Let a poor widow earn the fee; we will do it cheap, we two together, as we are here in the neighborhood."

"And we also do praying as diligently as anybody," said the other; "we can get references on that point."

Franzi looked at both of them somewhat astonished; unacquainted with the custom of the great city, she did not perfectly understand the request they had made of her. She opened her handkerchief, pressed a piece of money in the hand of each, and said, as she hastened after the grave-digger, "I thank you for your good intentions, my dear women, take that, and if you will include me in your prayers, I will be obliged to you; but to watch and to pray at the grave, is a duty which I have looked forward to for years. I will take charge of that myself."

She went away, and the women looked after her, grumbling.

"She must be a very stingy and contrary person," exclaimed one. "Take charge of the duty herself! and how she looked, too, as if she knew all about it, and did not come from the country where the beetles grow!"

"She had a whole handkerchief full of guilders," said the other, going back to her post, "and gives each of us a kreutzer! Well, as the man, so is the root! For that we can't open our mouths and say a word of prayer."

They crouched down and told their beads as diligently as before.

After a while, Staudinger came hobbling along in the same direction. By his side walked a tall, stout fellow, whose apron, stained with colors, showed that he was a painter; he bore a pole painted black, with a board on it of the same color. On this board was a white inscription in large letters. The old man was displeased, and scolded the journeyman in an angry tone. The watchers nudged each other with their elbows, and nodded at each other.

"How can you be so negligent, and keep me waiting so long for work that was ordered,"

exclaimed Staudinger, "and leave me standing in the weather almost an hour! It is a crying shame!"

"Ah, what's that!" answered the journeyman, sullenly. "The weather couldn't be finer. As the work was ordered to be done only to-day, it couldn't be got ready sooner."

"But the master promised me positively that the tablet would be fixed and ready in an hour."

"The master!" replied the journeyman, rudely. "He can easily promise who does nothing but give orders, and take in the money. I, as journeyman, ought to know better, for I have to do the work! One must wait a little while to let the color dry, otherwise it all runs together! And why are you, Sir, in such a tremendous hurry all at once? According to the date I have painted on the board, the woman whom it describes has already been dead for fifteen years. As you haven't been in a hurry, Sir, with the tablet for fifteen years, I don't see what difference an hour or so, sooner or later, makes now."

Meister Staudinger answered nothing. He ground his teeth, and stepped between the rows of desolate graves.

"But anyhow," growled the journeyman, "every one must know his own business best, and I meddle with nobody, but I will not let myself be scolded and imposed on. Where is the grave on which I must fix the tablet?"

The Meister pointed silently to the gravel mound with the nodding, brown rushes, and the solitary scabiosa.

"We will soon fix that," said the journeyman; "we can well see from the grave that no one has troubled himself about it. The grave will be astonished when it is thus honored, suddenly and so late! But the ground is too hard. I'll just see whether I can borrow a pick or shovel in the neighborhood."

He pushed the tablet with its sharpened end lightly into the mound, and hastened away. The Meister appeared to fear that it might not be well fixed in, and stepped up to it to drive it, as well as he could, more firmly into the ground.

At this moment Franzi, coming back, perceived from a distance that something was going on at the grave so dear to her, and hastened forward with steps winged with anxiety, especially as she could not make out what the man was doing at the grave, and still less could recognize the man himself.

When she reached the mound, the two stood opposite each other for the first time since the meeting at the Cross-Roads, driven by an adverse, yet divergent fate, and greatly changed. But the feeling of aversion with which she had formerly regarded him, remained the same.

Meister Staudinger was the weaker. He well-nigh tottered, and let the tablet slip, at the risk of its falling down, but it merely shook and remained standing, sharply inclined.

"This face," murmured he, inaudibly, "must I see this face again?"

Franzi spoke first; she stepped in his way before the mound, and exclaimed:

"What do you wish, Sir? What are you doing here?"

"And what right have you to ask?" answered he. "I wish to place a beautiful marble monument over this grave, and until it is ready I am going to place this tablet here."

"But not on this grave, Sir," cried Franzi, hastily. "It is certainly a mistake; the grave here is mine, I have bought it!"

"Bought it? How does that happen?" replied Meister Staudinger. "What have you to do with it? That is the grave of my daughter."

"Your daughter!" returned Franzi, fixing a staring look on him, while her words well-nigh died upon her lips. "I still think it must be a mistake," continued she, recovering herself; "you must have come to the wrong grave."

The Meister drew forth a ticket. "Third section," said he, in an uncertain tone, "in the fourth row, the fifteenth grave."

"That corresponds, certainly," said the maiden, trembling with excitement; "but still it must be an error. The superintendent of the grave-yard told me so, having opened his

book and I bought it, for in this grave lies my mother."

The old man reeled backward as if he had seen a ghost, raised his hand to his face, and grew deadly pale. He spoke not, but there rang through him a sound like a trumpet from the grave. In spite of his veiled eyes, it seemed to him as if the grave at his feet opened, and gave him a view into its depth, and of the features of the dead woman in her coffin, who lay mouldering there; and they were the features of her who stood living before him.

In the heart of Franzi, also, a foreboding arose, as the ruddy glare in the heavens announces the distant conflagration. "No! no!" whispered she, "it cannot surely be so, it is impossible, it must come out clearly that it is not so. The inscription on the tablet must make all plain." She stepped up to it and read: "To the memory of Frau Franziska Wall, esteemed for her honor and virtues, the daughter of a private gentleman—" She could read no further, for eye and voice failed her, and it was some time before she was able to

stammer out the words: "It corresponds; it is my mother's name."

The man had taken his hand from his face, and stared at the girl with wide-open eyes, in which light and darkness seemed to struggle together.

"You?" said he, in a low tone; "then is this why your face has always haunted me so? You—you were—"

"I am the daughter of the woman," said Franzi, interrupting him, in a determined tone, "who lies buried there, nothing more. It is, however, a mistake, for the dead under there was not the daughter of a rich private gentleman, but a poor woman, the wife of a journeyman joiner; as such, she went painfully through life, as such she gave me birth, as such she died in indigence and obscurity."

The old man could not yet overcome his stupefaction. Tottering with rage and excitement, he repeated again and again the question, "You, my daughter's child, my grand-child?"

"It seems so," answered Franzi, who had

gradually recovered her self-possession. "But don't trouble yourself about that, Sir. I have no desire to claim you as my grandfather. I do not reproach you with having treated me badly, and having been always set against me.

It is the best punishment that it was your own flesh and blood that you have injured out of mere vain arrogance. I have only to do with my poor mother who lies under there! So long as I have been my own mistress, I have had no other thought and no other wish than this, to find her out. Since then have I first fully experienced what it is to have no mother! For this reason I hired myself out as a waiter-girl in order to save my wages; for this reason have I hoarded up my every kreutzer, until I had got together as much as I thought would be necessary for all the searches and examinations. For this reason have I bought this grave, that the poor bearer of the cross, who lies here, might have a Christian cross over her grave; and for this reason that lying tablet shall not stand on it, for the grave is mine!"

The Meister now found his old inflexibility and defiance of the girl again.

"We will see about that," cried he. "I will show you that I, as father, also have rights."

"Rights as father?" cried Franzi; "and will you rest on that, would you rely on that, here at the very grave of the daughter whom you cast out?"

"She left me herself," answered Staudinger. "Why did not she obey my will, and why did she attach herself to a joiner who had nothing, and was nothing?"

"Nothing!" interrupted Franzi. "He had nothing but a pair of strong arms and a clear head; he was nothing but an honest, hard-working mechanic and a true man. He must have been this, otherwise my mother would not have loved him so dearly; that I feel in myself, and therefore I will allow nothing to be said against him any more than against my mother. If you should meet her hereafter in eternity, then you will be able to settle your account with her before the face of God; but here in the world, you shall have nothing to

do with what still remains of her. You shall set no stone upon her grave; she has already had enough of him who broke her heart. The grave is mine. Go your way and leave me to go mine. It is best that we two should remain as far from each other as possible."

"And have I ever thus wished for you?" answered the old man, angrily. "Yes, I do not deny that my heart has become soft in these latter days. I have been forced to think much on my daughter; I have wished to come to a reckoning with her, and with my conscience. Therefore she should have had an outward sign of this. If it is not to be, I can at least settle with her, without inscription and monument; but you I have not sought, and I will not know that I have found you! I know you not, and will not know you. I could pardon my daughter with honor, if I wished; she was an honest woman; but you—"

He did not finish, for Franzi stood before him face to face, rigid as a statue, and yet with the flaming countenance of an angel of vengeance.

"Speak not out, old man," cried she, with suppressed voice. "Speak not out what you now have upon your tongue. In this holy place, at the grave of my good, saintly mother, I tell you, and call her to witness in eternity, that I have done nothing at which I shall be forced to blush before her. But if it were so," continued she, still in a low voice, and seizing the old man by the arm, "if I had become wicked, would it have been my fault? Upon whom would the responsibility fall, but on him who thrust his daughter into the grave, and his grand-daughter into the Foundling Hospital."

The grave-digger, coming back richly laden with garlands and flowers, interrupted her.

"Here I am already, girl," cried he, from a distance. "I have chosen the most beautiful things. You will be delighted with them. And how we will arrange and adorn the grave!"

At the same moment, the painter, too, came back with the shovel and pick. Staudinger pointed to the tablet.

"Take that away with you," said he, turning to go. "It is of no more use now."

The journeyman looked after him with astonishment, while he lifted up the board.

"He is a very mean, stingy fellow," said he, "and I knew he would begrudge the money for the monument."

The grave-digger set himself to the work of forming the grave. Before he began, Franzi plucked some of the rushes and the solitary scabiosa, and stuck them in her bodice.

The solitary Manor Farm on All Souls' Day eve presented quite a different picture; one less rich in color, but still not the less darkly shaded.

It was still early in the afternoon, but the sitting-room had already commenced to grow gloomy and dark; for the small window, with its diminutive round panes, allowed little light to penetrate; and what did enter was faint, as the large linden-trees that surrounded the farmhouse still retained many of their leaves, and

because the farm-house lay on the shady side of the mountain, where the sun set earlier by a few hours than it did for the rest of the world. It was lonely about the farm. The servants had all gone off after dinner to attend vespers at the far-distant parish church, and to visit the graves of their friends and relatives. The old mistress remained alone in the house with one girl to protect it; but she was not sitting alone in the room. She had on that afternoon rare and unexpected company. Sixt sat upon the bench opposite his aunt; and the schoolmaster, who had come with him, had the place of honor at the table.

They held a long and earnest conversation with each other. So intent were they, that they did not notice how the darkness increased around them, and were regardless of the chanticleer on the clock, who faithfully warned them of their hourly approach to eternity. Sixt had taken the principal part in the conversation. He had much to say concerning himself and others. One thing only remained unmentioned, which was indeed not his own

secret, but that of the association of which he was the head.

"It cannot be otherwise, aunt," said he, ending a long discussion ; "something must be done in the matter ; we must do something to put an end to the talk and whispering, so that appearances may not become worse than they already are. I have thoroughly discussed the matter with the schoolmaster, and he also is of my opinion that we must do everything to get Franzi here, however well she may be concealed, or however distant she may be. She is the only person who can throw light on the affair. If we only have her once here, she surely can be induced to give an answer."

The old lady shook her head.

"I fear," said she, "you imagine too much. Franzi has always been a peculiar person ; and if she ever gets obstinate, I scarcely think you will get her to speak."

"I will hope it, however," answered Sixt. "It is true that she is stubborn, but she also has an amiable disposition. She is grateful to my parents for all that they have done for her ;

and she could not suffer us to stand in an improper light, and suffer on her account. Besides, why should she not speak?" he continued, as if consoling himself, after having waited in vain for an answer. "What has she to fear? It is true that it did seem to me for a long time, from what I myself saw and heard, that injustice had been done her; but again, when I calmly surveyed and compared everything, I could think so no longer; and hard as it is for me, for I have always had a high opinion of the girl, I must say that she, and no other, is the mother of the child, and she and no one else brought it to the Manor Farm. If she sees that denial is of no avail, and that the whole world knows it, then she will confess, will tell who is the father, and everything will come straight again. She will of course be punished; but as no injury has happened to the child, the punishment will not be severe, I think. They will, indeed, be indulgent to her; for this is certain, that she has already suffered enough, and has received the severest punishment."

"All correct," said the schoolmaster, thought-

fully, "if your premises are that she is really guilty."

Sixt had got up, and was pacing the room.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I know you have never given up that belief. There was a time when I, too, could have wagered a finger of my hand that it could not be so; but that won't help anything, and you will see that I am right if we only once find her."

"But if we do not find her?" inquired the schoolmaster. "You know I have written to Munich, where we first supposed her to be—I have influential acquaintances there—but no one was able to discover a trace of her."

"Because the time was too short," explained Sixt, "and because strangers never take much interest. I will go there immediately myself; and you may rely on it, schoolmaster, that I will find her out even if no other man could! Besides, I must find her. I have something to settle with her; she has done me a great service. She rescued me from a danger which was closing over me like a quicksand over a sinking person. I must repay her for that. I must

equalize things between us. I cannot be the debtor of one—but,” he continued, measuredly interrupting himself, “in the meantime something must be done to stop the common talk; and for that there is only one way—the child must go.”

“Poor dear!” sighed the aunt, “why must that be?”

“I have already told you, aunt,” answered Sixt; “for the talk will increase as long as the child remains with you; because the people will never understand how you could have received the child, if you did not know who its parents were; because they firmly and stubbornly believe that it was pre-concerted to receive the child into the house; because from this we are all getting into evil report—especially you and I, aunt; for every one knows what store you have laid by this: that nothing could take place at the Manor Farm that was not free and open to God and the world.”

“And I will insist on it,” said the old lady, resolutely. “I will, as long as I am able. And I will show the people that the mistress

of the Manor Farm will not, in her old days, lend herself as a cloak. You are right, Sixt, the child must go, although it will be hard for me. I have loved it, the poor creature !”

“No harm shall happen to it ! It shall be better off than thousands of such children ! I will cause it to be taken to a place where it will certainly want for nothing. I have already talked it over with the schoolmaster.”

“But it’s not to go yet !” said the old lady, with some hesitation. “Susi will not give up the child. It is like second life to her.”

“It cannot depend on that,” said Sixt. “My sister must yield, and must not prevent what we design as much for her good as for ours.”

“Certainly, but there will be a hard struggle, Sixt. She will soon come home, and if it must be done, then it were better for you to do it before she returns—the poor child !”

“A good suggestion, aunt,” cried Sixt, eagerly ; “the matter will thus soonest be brought to an end. It remains now for you, schoolmaster, to do what you have promised

me. Take my carriage; the maid shall carry the child. Drive away; you can reach the railroad station in an hour, and before the last train leaves. Proceed to the city, and take the child to the place agreed on. Early to-morrow I myself will go to court and relate what we have done. I think that the affair will quickly stand in another light."

This suddenly-conceived idea was quickly executed. The astonished girl brought the child, innocently sleeping in its little bed, packed some clothes, and forgot, in the un-hoped-for joy at the prospect of seeing the city, to ask the reason of this unexpected change. The old lady had the child handed to her again, and as on its arrival laid her hand upon its brow.

"I cast thee not off, poor little one," she said. "I will take care of thee as I have promised, but I never can keep thee at the Manor Farm."

The rattling of the departing carriage soon died away. Aicher, standing at the window, silently observed the old lady, as she sat in

her easy-chair with folded hands, praying for the safety of the child thus cast off for the second time.

"Sext!" she cried, after a time, as if she wished to break the breathless silence. "Where are you? Come here to me! Give me your hand."

He did so.

"Sext," said she again, "I have known you well, and can now tell you, as no one hears us but God. You know more than you say—you know about the rash death of your brother; but I do not wish to know what was the end of the hypocrite, for he will have to settle that with his God, whom he has belied all his life. I ask you nothing about it, for I know you have a firm hand, and that you will permit no disgrace to come upon yourself and all of us."

He responded silently to the pressure of the old lady's hand. Quick steps were approaching the door. She whispered:

"She is coming home. It is Susi. I wish the storm was over!"

The young girl walked hastily in. She had scarcely taken time outside to remove her shawl and draw off her walking-shoes. When she saw her brother, she stood astonished on the threshold. The lamp which she carried in her hand cast a full light over her face and figure ; a pleasant change had taken place in the young girl ; she was still pale, but the paleness had lost its ghastliness, and the flush which rose at the unexpected meeting was like the bloom of young and healthy life. Something like joy sparkled in her eyes, and a happy smile appeared about her lips. She saluted her brother with a hasty and surprised greeting, but her attention appeared to be fixed on something else. It was perceptible while she was telling her aunt about the churching from which she had just returned, and of the graves of her parents and cousin, which were adorned as beautifully as any in the church-yard of the parish.

“What is little Mariele doing ?” she asked, as she warmed her hands at the stove. “Has she not longed for me ? There is a cold cut-

ting wind blowing outside ; I must warm myself before I look after the child."

"There is time enough," said the old lady, with a faltering voice. "First prepare supper for Sixt, and put the spare chamber to rights. He will stay over night with us."

"Directly, aunt, directly. I must first look after the little one. She always wakes up at this time ; and you know, indeed, that she will stay with no one as she does with me."

She hurried to her room.

After Susi had gone to her chamber, the old lady turned her face sorrowfully in the direction where the farmer was walking to and fro, as if she could see him, and find in his demeanor rest from the care which had suddenly seized upon her heart.

A wild piercing scream rang from the chamber ; then Susi came rushing out again, trembling, pale, without her cap, her hair loose and wildly streaming.

"Holy Mother," she gasped, nearly swooning, "the cradle is empty and cold. Where is Mariele ? What has been done with the child ?"

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Sixt, with assumed calmness. The agony of his sister was so unmistakable, that he was obliged to turn away, in order not to be affected by her emotion. "It is well taken care of; you need have no fear about the child."

"Be not so wild, Susi, and so beside yourself," cried her aunt, mildly. "It is nothing. Come here and let me tell you."

"Tell me nothing, nothing," cried Susi, with trembling limbs and rolling eyes; "nothing until I know what has been done with the child. Speak, aunt! have pity on me! speak it, and pierce my heart at once with a knife. Some accident has happened to the child. It is dead."

"What unreasonable, crazy behavior," cried Sixt, angrily. "If you have learned this exaggerated manner in the city, I wish you had never gone there. The child lives, and is healthy and well; but it is gone."

"Gone? Out of the house?" cried Susi, breathing more easy, but yet oppressed again by a new affliction. "What does this mean,

dear aunt? Did you not receive and adopt the child as your own? How can it be taken away from the house where it belonged?"

"I did adopt it," said the mistress of the Manor Farm, and I have never broken my word. But I could not keep it at the Manor Farm. There has been altogether too much talk about the child in the neighborhood; we can stand it no longer."

"The court is again investigating the matter," said Sixt, confirmingly. They wish to discover to whom the child belongs, and who brought it here."

"Talk!" murmured Susi, and pressed both hands upon her brow. "Yes, yes, what won't we do to escape people's talk. We cannot bear the pricks of a needle, and would rather ourselves thrust a dagger in our own breast. But that does not trouble me at all. Must the poor child suffer on account of malicious talk?" she continued, with renewed passion. "I will know where the child is! I will go to it, and stay with it. Where have you taken the child?"

"That does not concern you," answered Sixt, harshly. "You must be reasonable and compose yourself, or I, your own brother, will take care that you do not ruin again, by your inordinate folly, what I have set to rights. The child stays where it is, and it is enough for you if I tell you that it is in the best hands, and you must be quiet."

"No, no, I will not," cried Susi, with ever-increasing excitement. "I cannot. I must have the child with me; must tend and nurse it. Oh, it is so accustomed to me that it will cry itself to death if it does not see me. Where is the child, Sixt? I love it so dearly, I cannot live without the child."

"You must learn to do it."

"Never, never. Think not that I exaggerate. It has grown into my heart. Tear it not away if you do not wish me to perish! Tell me where Mariele is? Give her to me again! If you really are my brother, show it and have pity on me. Give me little Mariele again; I must die without the child."

She had seized the farmer's hand, and was

about to sink upon her knees before him. He tore himself angrily loose, and cried :

"Nonsense, one does not die so easily. I am sure of that."

"Is there no mercy, then?" she wildly exclaimed. "Well, if entreaty will not do, then I will demand. Where is the child, Sixt? Tell me—give it back to me! You dare not refuse me. It is—my child; I am its mother!"

"Your child," shrieked the farmer, and stood as if petrified.

"Susi," stammered her aunt. She stood straight up in front of her chair, as if impelled by some invisible power.

Susi remained on her knees. Anger and indignation had disappeared with the decisive word. She was entirely given over to her agony, which streamed from her eyes in a flood of tears.

"The word is spoken," she sobbed; "the word which I believed would never pass my lips. I have spoken it. Yes, it is true!"

"True!" cried Sixt, and sank powerless on

the bench. "My own sister! Oh, what disgrace!"

The old lady, too, sank back again in the chair.

"I know not how it is, but I feel so badly," she faltered. "I believe it is all over with me."

"The city, the city," continued Susi, "is to blame for all. I too say, I wish I had never gone there! In our house there was a young man—a student. My brother was occupied the whole day with his business, and I was left to myself. The young man made advances to me, praised my beauty, and swore by all that was good, till he turned my head and heart. But one morning he disappeared secretly, no one knew whither. And when I, in mortal terror, which I dared betray to no one, inquired after him—when I too late asked about his origin and his home—then—"

"Well?" cried Sixt, in breathless suspense, as she paused a moment, struggling with her faintness.

"Then—then I learned that he could be

found nowhere—that he was an adventurer, who, under an assumed name, had come to the city.”

“And that too!” moaned Sixt, clasping his brow. “Oh my head, my head!”

The old lady could only sob in her arm-chair.

“No one,” continued Susi, arousing herself; “no one knew my secret and my shame. No one but a woman who lived in the back building, and supported herself by sewing, by going on errands for the people in the house, and by pawnbroking. My betrayer lived with her. Impelled by self-interest she allowed and furthered our meetings. In my despair I threatened suicide. To escape the punishment, she was obliged to assist me further. She received my child. To conceal its existence she took another child to nurse and board. It was to serve as a cloak for mine; and as she in her retired dwelling nursed and showed the child intrusted to her, no one suspected that she was concealing a second.”

“Horrible!” cried Sixt. “What an abyss

of depravity. And my own sister, too, at the bottom of the abyss."

"At the very lowest depth," cried Susi, painfully. "Oh, how I struggled, how I suffered while alone with myself and the consciousness of my crime; consumed by an ardent longing for the unhappy creature to which I had given life, and yet without the courage, by confessing my shame, to take it openly to me; tortured by the ever-increasing demands of my accomplice, and yet bound to her by the impossibility of any other expedient; the constant vacillation between hope and fear; the change from ecstasy when I could be with my child, to despair when I was obliged to leave it, at last overcame my strength. I became sick, and when I recovered, the first thing I learned was the determination of my brother to leave the city, and return to the country. I know not how I tore myself away, how I pacified my accomplice, and deceived her by fair hopes. I was in a state of tumult and frenzy. Half dying, I left the city; and my agony would certainly have killed

me, had not heaven sent me an angel—Franzi.”

“Franzi!” cried Sixt, and sprang up. “Oh God! what do you remind me of? And of her, of that unfortunate girl, I am just thinking for the first time.”

“She came to me full of love, and met me with all her old kindness,” said Susi, softly weeping. “For the first time I met, in the trusted companion of my youth, a mild, benevolent disposition. I was not able to keep my secret from her. In her solitary chamber I cast myself on my knees before her, and confessed everything to her. She did not scold me. She did not talk or ask much, but she gave me her hand, and said, ‘I will help you, Susi; I know what it is to have no mother; the poor little child shall not grow up so; it shall be with you; the dear God will certainly show me a way so that you may have the child with you, and the secret remain concealed.’ And she honestly kept what she promised. She went into the city, and took the child from the woman, who was rejoiced to be rid of the secret and of her

anxiety. In order that no one might see her with the child, she concealed herself in the baggage-car behind the barrels and boxes, and then carried it to the Manor Farm. She took the child to its own mother. That is all I have to say ; now do with me what you will, I will bear it. Ruin me, brother, if I deserve it, but take care of my dear, dear child, or give it back to me if you can pardon me."

"Pardon you!" cried the old lady, who vainly sought to raise herself in her chair. "Never!" she shrieked, as the chanticleer on the clock again warned them of eternity. "Never to all eternity. Your child I will take back. I will not make it suffer for your baseness, will not punish it instead of you; but I know you no more, and I wish to know nothing hereafter of you. You shall hear no more of me, and never pass as my—"

She did not finish. Swooning away like one dying, she sank back in the chair.

"Pardon?" cried Sixt, advancing, and jerking the girl up from her knees. "Do you know all you are to blame for? Franzi has

been innocently brought by you into shame and disgrace. Your own brother has accused her falsely, and she has been unjustly condemned—she whom I have so much to thank for, who appears to me in person like a good spirit, and my guardian angel. Pray, sister, pray to God to pardon you. But I—I cannot.”

He rushed out into the night, unconcerned about those whom he left almost lifeless behind him. There was no more silent house on the whole mountain than that of the Manor Farm.

CHAPTER VI.

WINTER had fully set in among the mountains.

Looking down the narrow village street of Osterbrunn, you would perceive nothing but the white, newly fallen-snow, which, spreading around on all sides, concealed everything like an enormous mantle, and yet clung closely to all objects, so that their indistinct outlines could be recognized. The roofs of the houses were changed into hillocks, beneath which the brown, wooden walls looked out somberly, betraying what a wretched shelter they were against storm, frost, and winter. Along the eave glistened icicles of all shapes and sizes, like an artistic cornice which had been designedly placed there; and where along the street the spouts gaped with dragon mouths at each other, their fantastic heads were adorned with still more fantastic beards of ice, which hung down in long, stiff crystals. The spout of the

village spring was crowned with a high cap; and the large linden-tree, under the shade of which the little stream was wont to gush out so freshly, had each bough covered with snow like a protecting sleeve, and stood as stiff and grave as if it were mourning over the young life beneath it; which now, as if pining away, trickled down drop by drop upon the accumulated heap of ice. Further on, at the end of the street, beyond the snow-covered hill, and through the bare tree-tops of the gardens, the mountains towered up like the ice giants of fable, their summits splendid with the reflected light of the sun, which was just about to finish its short winter afternoon's course. Nothing was moving in the wide, white landscape, but here and there an astonished flock of sparrows who knew not where to find their usual rich nourishment, or a raven which flew with shining plumage croaking over the village. All other life had withdrawn in-doors, and could be observed in the regularly alternating strokes which sounded sharply and loudly from the threshing floor of the sheds and barns.

The round, projecting bow-window of the Osterbrunn Inn offered an agreeable place for the observation of the winter picture. A more sheltered and comfortable one could hardly be imagined. The room was empty, but in the bow-window old Grubhofer sat, astride of a three-legged chair, twisting his white moustache, or looking out into the winter evening, with a glowing short pipe in his hands, which were crossed over the back of the chair. He often spoke a few words intended for the hostess, who had fallen asleep beside the large green-tiled stove, and which were so little regarded by her that he did not seemingly expect them answered.

“The sun is setting quite red,” he said, “and the brook is roaring; the cold is growing apace, as is often remarked upon St. Martin’s Day. I must be stirring, or I will freeze fast before I get down to the mine. But look, there is some one coming around the school-house. Who can it be? He will have to wade through the snow, for there is no path shoveled yet. It seems to me as if he was

coming toward the inn, and will keep me company. If so, I will stand another tankard. It is really so!" he cried more loudly, and rattled the lid of his tankard so that he aroused the hostess out of her half sleep. "Fill up, hostess. That is no other than the overseer of Westerbrunn, old Finkenzeller. What can he be seeking so late at Osterbrunn?"

While the old man arose, and in his curiosity went to the door, Finkenzeller was already on the threshold, stamping the snow from his feet, and looking astonished into the room.

"Well, how can this be?" said he, as he shook the hoarfrost from his hair and beard. "I have run over here in the twilight, all the way from Westerbrunn, thinking I should find the whole room full of people; and in the meantime it is quite empty. Grubhofer only is perched up here in the large room like a withered kernel in its shell. Am I wrong? Does not the choice of overseer take place in Osterbrunn to-day?"

The hostess came with the tankards up the steps from the cellar.

"What do you mean, Finkenzeller?" she said. "Do you think that I have stolen my wood, that you remain standing there in the middle of the open door, and keep on talking. You let so much cold into the room that I will have to put a whole forest into the stove."

"It is no wonder if I remain quite petrified," said Finkenzeller, as he entered and closed the door behind him, with playful carefulness. "This is as good as a miracle. I imagined you would have to keep doors and windows open on account of the crowd, so that fresh air might get into the room; instead of that, it is as empty here as in Jacob's barn. You need not get angry on my account, hostess. When I come here again, I will bring a cloak-full of heat from home, so that we may be even. I am only rejoiced that there is a Christian here who can tell a man something. Grubhofer, you old rebel, come here and help me out of my dream. Is not to-day the day of the choice for overseer?"

"It's all over, old fellow," answered the old

man, with a sly, pleased smile ; "everything is settled—it's all over."

"Settled? Over? But how? that is the important matter. I had no rest at home. I could not wait until it was brought to-morrow by the post. I had to know it to-day, for you know what store I place in him whom I mean ; and when I think of what a whispering there has been going on lately, my head gets quite hot. Well, show your colors ; who is overseer of Osterbrunn? Must I swear, or may I hurrah?"

"You may," laughed the old man, "if nothing has happened to your wind-pipes. No other man is overseer of Osterbrunn than he whom you mean."

"Hurrah!" cried Finkenzeller, striking the table, and with a voice as fresh and loud as if he had been a careless youth, who, having gone out in the forest, shouts down from a mountain cliff to the hut below. "Well done, ye Osterbrunners! It was a sensible act in you, that you had a spirit not to be bribed. I have always said that Sixt of the Oak Farm

is a whole-hearted and honest lad, and that there is not a word of truth in the whole report!"

The old man again made a sly face, and was much occupied with his moustache.

"Well, well," said he, "as far as concerns the spirit, we will not make ourselves out better than we are. No one of us exactly believed all that stuff, but you know how it goes with such an affair. No matter how fine the rain is, if it does not cease to fall, it will at last soak through the thickest foliage. Something, however, will always adhere, no matter how strongly you may oppose it. His worship, the Bailiff, moreover, did not cease to stir up the wasp's nest, and I would not like to have answered for the consequences if Sixt had not come in himself, and spoken."

"But how? only tell it," urged Finkenzeller, as both seated themselves in the recess, through the window of which the cold evening light was glimmering in even more faintly.

"It was quickly done," said Grubhofer, "and can be as quickly told. The men of the

district were all there, except one, the most important of all—Sixt of the Oaks. That suited his worship very well. He then made a discourse concerning the important dignity of the overseer of the district. He must be a man without blemish, and he recommended and extolled the old cooper as an honest and Christian man, a relic of the old times, and one whom we ought to select—that we could nowhere get a better overseer. The cooper, who is nearly seventy years of age, stoutly opposed it, and said that he really never in his lifetime succeeded in reading and writing. All was of no avail, the Bailiff had already ordered the voting to begin. All at once the door opened, and the farmer of the Oaks came in.”

“The fine fellow!” said Finkenzeller, and forgot to carry the tankard, the lid of which he had raised, to his mouth.

“You know what an air of authority he can assume,” the old man continued; “just like a lord or a man from the city; and so he came in and said, ‘God save you, neighbors all; do not be hard on me because I come late, and

because I stop your proceedings; but I have something to tell you.'

" 'Something to tell,' said his worship, who made a face like a field full of devils. 'These good people are assembled here now to choose an overseer, and not to listen to your tales. Such foreign matters do not belong to the transactions of the office.' But Sixt would not be put off, and taking a position in the middle of the room, said, 'The story which I have to tell, has also something to do with the community's choice. You yourself, Herr Baron, lately said that you would make every exertion so that you could announce to us at our next meeting the parentage of the child which was exposed at my aunt's at the Manor Farm, and who had brought the child there. The matter must therefore have something to do with the community's choice.' His worship once more attempted to speak against it, and said that these were family matters which did not concern the community in the least. But the peasants had become restive, and said that they would hear Sixt before they made their

selection, and he then straightway began to tell his story."

"But what next? Let me know at once."

"What else than that he now disclosed who was the mother of the child, and who had exposed it at the Manor Farm. 'It is truly a hard punishment,' he said, 'to have to say this, and have to strike one's self in the face; but when it becomes necessary to assist an innocent person who is suffering on account of it, you must then speak; to be silent would be a greater disgrace still.' He then related that Susi, his own sister, had assured him that she had been betrayed by a stranger in the city, that she was the mother of the child; and not having the courage to confess it, and yet not being able to live without the child, Franzi had come to her assistance, had secretly taken it from the city, and had carried it to the Manor Farm."

"The mother then caused her own child to be exposed as a stranger's before her own door," exclaimed Finkenzeller, astonished. "What don't you live to see in the world if you get

old enough! Then Susi is the mother of it. How everything agrees. It was on that account, then, that she looked like one with a bad conscience in famine time! But that Franzi is a noble, courageous lass! How could all this have happened to her! And what she must have endured! And she has endured it, and had only to open her mouth and speak a single word. I feel as if I could hurrah again for joy, that there are such people left in the world. But such a pearl I cannot pass over. Early to-morrow I will hitch up my Swiss wagon and fetch Franzi home as my wife, even if I have to drive up and down the whole land for her."

"Yes, if we only knew where she is," answered Grubhofer, thoughtfully. "There is one, perhaps, who would get ahead of you; for Sixt thinks of nothing else but how to find her, and how to make amends for what she has innocently suffered on account of his sister. But this is just the difficulty, that she can be found nowhere; and if she is not soon found, I know not how the story will end. It

seems to me that he takes it to heart, and is losing all his flesh."

"We will assist in the search! But how was it with his worship the Bailiff? What did he say to the story?"

"That you may imagine," cried Grubhofer, laughingly. "He turned all colors from vexation. But what could he do? He showed his teeth like the fox for whom the grapes hung too high. But he went up to the farmer of the Oaks, and patting him on the shoulder, said, 'That does you credit, Aicher; that you tell everything yourself openly and candidly. It is a sign that the truth and integrity of the old time has not died out yet, at least in the mountains.'"

"I can imagine that after this no more persuasion was used in the selection."

"Of course, the overseer was chosen before you could turn your hand; and if there had been fifty ballots, no one else would have been on them than Aicher of the Oaks."

"That is the cause, then, of their breaking up so soon. But did the Bailiff leave as quickly?"

"He left before the peasants, who had to talk a little before they went. He did not even wait for the result, and told the secretary that he should prepare the record and follow him ; and for this he had a good excuse. An express arrived from the office bringing him important news. The rag-picker, Alise, whom they had kept all this time in prison, in order to make him divulge what had occurred at the last Haber court, and the name of the Habermmeister, had broken the bars of his prison and escaped."

"They have been severe on the poor devil. They ought to leave him alone. They say he has become quite crazy since he has been in jail."

"That was not all ; the second piece of news was of still greater importance. You must know, Finkewzeller, that there has been a report for some time that the Government at the capital has not been satisfied with his worship on account of the report on the Forest proceedings and on account of the Haber court, and various other matters. They are go-

ing to send a commissioner to investigate and examine everything on the spot."

"I have already heard something to that effect."

"Well, then, the rag-picker had gone, and the commissioner had arrived; that was the second piece of news."

"This comes just at the right time," said Finkewzeller, emptying his tankard; "we will hasten to get on. I will bestir myself to catch the Westerbrunners together, and impart the news to them. It is already quite dark outside, and if the snow did not shine, we would have to feel our way with our hands."

"It is not so dangerous," said Grubhofer, while he arose at the same time and wiped the frosted window panes, in order to be able to look out into the night. "It will soon be light when the moon rises."

"The moon?" laughed Finkewzeller. "If we wait for it, it would be a little late. It does not rise before midnight."

"Why not?" cried Grubhofer again. "Over

yonder, between the houses, beyond the strip of woods, it already rises quite light."

"Truly," said the other one, coming up, "but that is not the light of the moon, Grubhofer; it is too broad and flickering for that."

"You are right, Finkenzeller," cried Grubhofer, hastily, "that is a fire. Something is burning there! But what can it be? I think it is in the direction of Mirsbach."

"And I think we ought to hurry," said Finkenzeller. "Let us follow the light, and we will soon see where the fire is, and can help to extinguish it a little. Don't you agree, old rebel?"

They hurried away. There was a noise in the village; you could hear voices and the striking of a bell which served as the usual fire alarm. The clanging strokes sounded fearfully through the night. The nodding hostess, startled out of her slumber, ran to the window and beheld the fire, which every moment flared up more brightly and broadly over the dark fir-trees, and was reflected far away over the expanse of snow.

"A sad misfortune," she murmured, crossing her brow and breast. "Doubly hard in this cold weather, no matter whom it strikes."

She then went to her little closet in the wall, in which were kept the tankards and glasses, and brought out a beautiful wreathed red wax taper. She lighted it and placed it upon a little household altar in front of a carved image of a saint, clad in the armor of a Roman warrior, a red banner in one hand, and with the other pouring water from a vessel over a house at his feet, from the windows of which the carved and painted flames burst out fearfully. She seated herself quietly before it, and prayed to St. Florianus that he would protect her house and premises from a like visitation.

Both men hastened as fast as the deep snow would allow them on their pathless course toward the light, exhausting themselves with conjectures as to where the fire could have broken out. From all sides dark figures came running over the snow. The inmates hurried out of each house they passed, to help their

unfortunate neighbor as much as possible. Some went by upon half-harnessed horses, in order to carry intelligence of the mishap to the more remote quarters to which the alarm of fire would not reach. Past these hurrying people, rushed a team of four completely harnessed horses, with a rider upon the leader, who urged them on as if in flight toward the village.

"Ah, ha!" said one of the men, "the new overseer shows himself already. Was that not Aicher rushing by so?"

"Certainly," cried Grubhofer, holding up a little in his fatiguing run through the snow. "He has seen the fire from his farm, and has straightway hit the nail on the head. He drives into the village to get the fire-engines; and as heretofore almost an hour has always been lost before they could determine whose turn it was to furnish the team, and before it could be properly harnessed, he has brought his own horses with him."

"I have thought from the very beginning," said Finkenzeller, as he hurried on again, "the fire must be either in a wood hut or soli-

tary house; for it does not lie in the direction of any settlement, and is so high up that you can see the flames. You will come to my conclusion that it is nothing else than the little place beyond the heights of Mangfall, in the corner of the Rautinger forest."

"That is the same that once belonged to the rag-picker," answered the other. "It is probably the direction, but it is very deceptive by night. The place is empty, no one is living there, and it is to be sold at auction to-morrow. But how could the fire break out there?"

The two hastening men just then turned the corner of the forest which had before interrupted their view, and stood at a short distance from the flaming building.

"Finkenzeller is right," said Grubhofer, "it is really the rag-picker's place. But how could the fire break out there? Some incendiary must have set it on fire."

"Or perhaps the crazy rag-picker has done it himself in desperation," cried Finkenzeller. "If it is true that he has escaped from prison, it is not improbable."

They already approached the place of the fire. The little estate lay pleasantly in an open meadow, which, surrounded on three sides by the woods, sloped away on the fourth to the steep ravine through which the Mangfall foamed between rugged rocks and narrow heights. The flames had already seized upon the whole house and the out-buildings, and arose in high columns and broad sheets into the dark sky; now sinking, now bursting forth more powerfully again, as a newly-reached rafter, or a forgotten heap of fodder or straw gave it fresh nourishment; crackling and scattering sparks, which outshone the light of the stars, and shed an unnatural redness over the whole region. It lighted up the black snow-bedded fir-trees on all sides, and a few leafless beech-trees scattered around, which, like a troop of dark watchers, had long faithfully guarded the farm, and now, horror stricken, saw it laid in ruins. A deep and awful silence reigned over the whole neighborhood; you heard no cries or lamentations of those whose little all was being destroyed, and who in their

- solitude called in vain for help. Those who were to make outcry and alarm, would come first from a distance. Lonely, solemn, like a gigantic flame of sacrifice, the unchained element fulfilled its office.

"There won't be much to extinguish and save there," cried Finkenzeller, as he came with his companion before the burning house. "The old timbers burn like a bundle of shavings. It is well there is not much in there except the lumber of old chairs and tables, so there can be no damage done. The stone and wood could not be used again; and as the house lies so apart, and the fire cannot spread any further, it were indeed best to let the whole rubbish burn up quietly."

One of the men had approached as near the building as the shower of sparks from the roof and the threatening fall of the burning rafters would allow. Just then Sixt came dashing along at a furious pace, with his four-horse team drawing a large sled, upon which was the fire-engine, and which he at once put to work.

"Holy Mother!" exclaimed the horrified

man, springing back from the closed window-shutters on the ground floor, which he had approached, "this is horrible indeed; it seemed as if something were moving in the room—as if I heard a man's voice."

No one had heard anything, and they were all about to agree in pronouncing it a delusion, when the words stuck in their throats, their breath ceased, and their hair bristled with horror. From the lower room of the flaming house a man's half-stifled yell, or cry of anguish, penetrated clearly and undeniably. The smoke poured out of the cracks between the shutters, and the fire from above seemed to have burst through the ceiling.

Horror-stricken voices in wild confusion shouted out, "Bring a beam here! a fire hook! Batter in the shutters, there is some one in the house!" The men who had come with the engine hastily dragged some poles there, and they were soon driven with great force against the window shutters, so that the old wood-work quickly fell to pieces.

The smoke poured out more densely, but

they now became aware of a new obstacle to their entrance: the windows were grated with strong iron bars. "Go on!" is again shouted out. "Seize the bars with the hooks! Tear them out!" The window panes rattled, the wooden frames cracked where they were set into the walls, while louder, terribly louder, sounded the yell of agony.

When the window shutters were all torn away, the confined smoke found an escape in all directions, and the wind blew it away, kindling the fire into a flame. A light blaze flashed up in the room, until this moment so darkened. Sixt was the first to spring forward and look in to see who was in the house, and how to help him.

"It is the rag-picker!" he exclaimed, staggering back, and clasping his hands over his eyes, blinded by the heat and smoke. "He is lying on the floor stupefied by the smoke, as it seems, but on the table is lying a whole pile of silver."

"The rag-picker!" ran from one to another. "How did he get in there? If he is in there,

then no other than he set it on fire. We ought just to let him burn up with it, the rascal."

"Surely not, neighbors," Sixt said, drowning the noise with commanding voice; "even if he be a good-for-nothing fellow, yet he is a man, and is in danger; and no one who has a true heart in his body would let a fellow-creature remain so. Let us find some way that we may get him out of the trap in which he appears to have shut himself up. Lay hold quick! lend a hand, whoever has a heart in his body!"

His words and manner again verified the oft-proven result. They submitted to these directions, because they had in themselves something really commanding; no further opposition was heard, every objection was silenced, and with renewed activity they all set to work again. While some fastened the hooks to the bars and strove to tear out the iron grating, others endeavored with beams to force out the whole window casement, while a third party used a heavy trunk of a tree as a battering-ram to burst in the door. It was all

in vain ; the stout, firmly-made door resisted the most violent blows, and was evidently barricaded from within. The rag-picker had fastened himself in, and was now caught in his own trap.

This supposition was indeed well founded. The confinement in prison and the constant brooding solitude had increased the distraction in the unfortunate man's heated brain. He lived under a stupid delusion ; and as in an expiring grate one last red spark still glimmers, so in him one idea alone continued to glow—to escape in time to recover his former property. As has been related, this property, which the owner subsequent to Alisi had not been able to retain, was again offered at auction, that the true though insignificant value might be obtained ; but during the day no one appeared to offer a sufficient price, and it had been advertised at auction sale a second time, and was then to be knocked down to some one even at the very smallest bid. The fatal day was drawing nearer and nearer ; and that all hope of ever again possessing the property

might not be at once and for ever destroyed, it was necessary for him to be at liberty within the next few days, and this thought urged him on unceasingly like a red-hot goad. Whether he could, however, get the property, whether the authorities would allow him to enter into possession of it, whether the sum that remained after what had been taken from him would be enough; all that he neither thought of nor considered; he had done all that was necessary, if he could only once leave the prison walls behind him.

With an old nail pulled with difficulty from the floor, he began to dig into the wall where the single window of his cell was built in, and after days and nights of unspeakable labor, actually succeeded in so loosening the window-frame, that though it appeared securely fixed, it was yet merely set in. No one had observed the weary work which had occupied him for weeks, because the warden was always satisfied with a mere glance through the room, considering his escape impossible. The walls were secure; the iron-studded door was impenetra-

ble; and the window was built so high that a person standing on tiptoe and stretching up his arms could barely reach it with the ends of his fingers. But the strength of the prisoner's delusion had made the impossible possible to him; the fever in his brain had so steeled his muscles, that by pressing his knees against the wall, he was able to climb up like a gymnast, and to hold on until his long work was complete. The day before the auction he had succeeded so far. The woollen bed-clothes, torn in strips and tied together, afforded a sure and easy means of letting himself down on the wall outside, and thence with no very dangerous leap to reach the ditch, which was unguarded, and where, especially at night and in the snow which was then falling, he need no longer fear discovery. Quick as the wind driving the snow-flakes, he flew across the meadows and fields, and in his hurried flight made but one halt, at a corner of the forest where a little brook crept along under the willows, where in a hollow tree he had hidden a portion of the money.

With a subdued cry he pressed close to his heart the money-bag in his jacket pocket, and ran with redoubled speed until he arrived at the desired goal. The door of the house was closed, but being perfectly familiar with the place, near the stable he broke out a board close to the ground, and crawling through like a snake, forced himself into the deserted space within. He groped his way through stable, kitchen, and passage, up to the sitting-room, and was rejoiced to find on the stove, where it used to lie, the remnants of a tinder-box, from which he succeeded in producing some sparks. A bundle of neglected shavings served to illuminate the familiar room, once so dear to him. By the dim, uncertain light he hurried about the room, handling with childish delight all the objects and trifles which were still there ; as part of the house and belonging to it, they had remained in it, and thus had passed from hand to hand. There was the old table, and set into the wall above it the crucifix, and long withered branches of the round-leaved willow and thorn-tree, covered with dust, and the

little vessel for holy water at the door, and the large stove with its round, deeply-graven tiles. Smilingly he patted this, and began in a half-audible voice to talk with it as with an old acquaintance.

"Are you cold, old comrade?" said he. "I am no better off; but we will soon cure that. I will kindle a fire in you, so that you will roar again. If my wife comes with the boy, she will be nearly frozen; then she shall find a warm room."

Hurrying out, he soon found a faggot of sticks and some old pieces of wood, and in a few minutes a brisk flame was crackling in the stove. Chuckling, he squatted down before it; and his glassy, gleaming eyes staring at the fire, showed that the delusion had taken stronger and more complete possession of him. With mad activity he threw in more sticks, shouting with joy at the ever-increasing blaze and roar. But he did not notice that the long-disused chimney had burst in the story above, and began to throw a great number of sparks into the garret. The rafters had begun to burn

brightly, when still in frantic joy he got up on the table, and let the silver pieces roll out of the bag on it, and was delighted as they glittered and sparkled in the bright light, and with the thought of what joy his wife would have, and especially his boy, when they should come home and find again a warm, homelike room, and the unexpected glittering treasure. When the fumes and smoke, driven down from above, began to pour into the room, and let the first warning of the surrounding danger dawn upon him, it was already too late to escape. He tore open the door, but the clouds of smoke poured in, and utterly choking the stupefied man, cast him to the floor.

Now, upon the entrance of air and of a draft, the smoke grew less dense, and the power of breathing returned to the prostrate man at the stove, and with it a dawning consciousness again. With uncertainty he opened his eyes, but their first glance fell upon the bright light of the fire breaking through from above, and with a cry of horror he sprang up suddenly from the floor, all at once becoming fully aware of

the whole danger of his position. As a wild beast in his cage, terrified by fire, springs with a roar of wrath and anguish against the iron bars, and strives to break through them, so the rag-picker with a bound rushed against the outer door, but fell back staggering, for he himself had barricaded it most carefully, and in the terror and anguish of the moment had not strength or sense to remove quickly enough the props and bars which he himself had placed there. A howl of rage issued involuntarily from his throat, for he saw and heard how his rescuers outside were making every effort to force an entrance to him, but also saw above him the gleaming and flaming roof-beam sink, and heard it crackle and crumble, and thought that perhaps it might fall in ere they accomplished their purpose.

"This is horrible to listen to!" said Finckenzeller, outside. "I shall not forget it if I live to be a hundred years old! Quick, neighbors, lend a hand again more vigorously, that we may release the poor man from his pain.

I think his craziness will have left him for ever, and his wickedness too."

"Throw the water more on the beam!" cried out Sixt, with a loud voice, interrupting them. "Perhaps we may extinguish the fire before it falls in. Do not hit it squarely, but let the stream strike it sidewise, that its force may not first knock it down."

"It is of no use, overseer," a voice cried out from the engine, "the well has failed. We have no more water."

At that, woeful cries from the unfortunate man issued from the burning house.

"I shall be burnt up!" cried he. "I shall be suffocated! Help, help! for God's sake, help me! Why should I have such a horrible fate! I am innocent. Let me not be burnt up. Oh, heavens! the timbers above there are already beginning to fall in. Help me! Let me out! If it must be, I will answer for it. Yes, I did it! I burnt my brother's house over his head. I am the cause of his becoming poor. I am responsible that the old people were almost burnt up. Let me out. I will confess every-

thing. I will bear the punishment for it. Only let me not burn up. Holy Mother and Joseph, only let me not burn up."

"Do you hear?" cried the peasants to each other. "He confesses it. So indeed he was improperly acquitted by the court, and the Haberfeld was right."

"Keep on!" the powerful voice of the farmer of Oaks shouted out. "The door is breaking. One more blow, and we can drive it in."

In a second after, the door, broken to pieces, crashed in; but at the same moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the beams and rafters of the roof, shaken probably by the violence of the last shock, bent together and fell down in one burning mass, sending up showers of sparks. Everything was buried beneath, and in it the scream of the rag-picker died away.

All efforts ceased before this momentary violence of the elements, in comparison with which every human effort sank into dreadful insignificance. Some received this downfall with cries of horror; others with bared heads

and folded hands uttered short prayers for the unfortunate man, who had paid a heavy debt in such a terrible way. But soon the momentary effect of the shock passed away as quickly as it had come, and they all rushed to the burning mass to scatter it, and to save what might remain, as by a miracle. In the course of half an hour their common purpose was accomplished, and they penetrated to the very ground. They found a body, charred almost beyond recognition, and not far from it were lying some blackened pieces of silver.

The day after this a sleigh had drawn up at Hacking, before an inn situated close to the highway, in a lonely position some distance from the village. Hacking is the last village before you reach the now deserted main road from Tegernsee, coming out from the mountains towards Munich. It was bright, cold weather; beneath clear, blue sky, thousands and thousands of stars and points glittered and

glistened on the fields of snow, stretching out further than the eye could see. Regardless of this beautiful scene, and paying no attention to the blast of wind which, driving little particles of loose snow before it, from time to time swept over the level country, evidently from the North, the young farmer of Oaks with long steps strode up and down before the house. Any one who had not seen him for some time, might be in doubt whether the healthy flush of his cheeks had paled somewhat, or whether the reflection from the snow made it merely appear a shade lighter. But it was unmistakable that his eyes, over which a fur cap was drawn low, did not appear so cloudless and open as when he met Franzi at the Cross-Roads. They must have been serious thoughts which occupied him, for often involuntarily he would pause in his walk, as if to interrupt the succession of pictures passing before his mind's eye; then again he would hasten his steps, as if to retain a flitting thought, or to arouse himself to some affair suddenly resolved upon. Several times he

hurried to the stable, where the horses were being fed, and, returning, appeared displeased that his further journey was still delayed.

The schoolmaster from Osterbrunn, approaching from the road, wrapped in a large peasant's cloak, interrupted his meditations.

"Well, what is the condition of things? How is it?" asked he, drawing nearer. "Is the brown horse in good order again? Can we soon go on?"

"It is all right," answered the farmer. "The nag was a little strained at the fire last night, and was slightly foundered, it seems; but the warm drink which I poured down his throat, answered the purpose, and in a quarter of an hour we may be on our way again."

The schoolmaster pretended not to hear the remark of the farmer, and to be occupied with other pressing thoughts, which demanded his whole attention. A glance at Sixt's excited countenance and his restless manner, may have prompted him to this. He had employed the leisure time given him by this involuntary de-

lay in the lonely little village, in going about it, and appeared entirely occupied with what he had seen.

“One can learn something everywhere indeed, if he will only keep his eyes open! I passed by here two years ago; it was late in the summer, just at the beginning of harvest time; but it looked badly for the harvest. A hail-storm had passed over the neighborhood the day before, and as far as you could see, the grain was blown down and the straw beaten to the ground, so that one could see nothing but black soil and stubble. There was also an apple-tree in the landlord’s garden over the way, in which I had taken great interest for many years—a beautiful strong trunk, with bark as smooth as satin, and shining as silk—an excellent kind of apple—a real winter Stettiner—and this year it was strewn over, as it were, with the first fruit. This tree the hail cut up very badly. It stood in the very corner over which the storm swept most mischievously. The half-ripened fruit was lying by the hundred round about on the grass, covered

with leaves and branches ; there was scarcely a leaf left on it ; the bark was torn and stripped, and most of the young fruit-buds were broken off. I was so worried about the tree, that I almost gave it up for lost. But now it is firm on its roots, and has, by good fortune, lived through it. I have just seen the tree ; it has recovered ; and the bark, even over the cracks and scars, is as smooth as before. The fruit branches especially have grown again, and next spring the tree will stand there with a profusion of blossoms, and more beautiful than it ever was before."

Sixt was not disposed to share the school-master's pleasure in trees, and still less did he observe the concealed reference plainly contained in it. He had been walking silently by the speaker, and now, at the call of the servant, went to the place where the horses, at length warmed and fed, stood ready for the start. With evident haste he assisted the servant, under whose hands the harnessing did not progress rapidly enough, and in like manner he seized the whip and reins, so that be-

fore the schoolmaster could wrap himself comfortably in the shaggy green sleigh-robe, the horses dashed off as swift as an arrow and with jingling bells over the hard-frozen, snowy road. For some time they drove silently along through the monotonous pine forest; no conversation occurred, though the schoolmaster several times tried to introduce it, now calling attention to the tracks upon the snow, where a stag had repeatedly crossed the road; and again to a place where gnawed, reddish bark, thickly strewn about over the whitened ground, showed where a dainty-mouthed squirrel had been greatly enjoying the resinous fir-apple. But Aicher remained silent and pre-occupied.

He had indeed good reason for this. During the last few days much had been pressing upon him. There were strong and violently opposing currents, which he was anxious to restrain and confine. Although his position in the village and community had been so assured by his election to the office of overseer that neither injury nor damage could threaten his

honor or consideration, yet the man had been so deeply moved and shocked by the events and horrors of the night before, that he sought in vain to silence the doubts and scruples as to the propriety of his secret office, which had been called up in him by this occurrence. He found no other comfort but in the thought that with the approaching winter, the time for this had expired; and that before the next autumn, and the next meeting of the people's court, there would be sufficient time and opportunity for consideration and decision.

Moreover, it had happened that at the Manor Farm, also, events had become complicated again.

The old, gray-headed aunt, in her spirit of relentlessness, and according to the severe morality in which she had been reared, had, as soon as she had recovered her composure, banished Susi from the house, and called God to witness that she would rather He would allow the roof to be burnt over her head, than willingly pass another night under it with Susi. In order to avoid greater scandal, Sixt was al-

ready considering whether he should take the unhappy girl to his house on the paternal estate, or should find out some other means of providing for her. But the point solved itself; for the excitement of his sister, which had gone so far that it must either have ceased at once or brought her to the mad-house, attacked first of all her bodily strength, which had hardly yet been restored, and cast the weak girl on a bed of dangerous illness, so that to remove her from the house was equivalent, even in the attempt, to killing her outright. A miserable apartment in an outbuilding of the farm, which was used as quarters for the servants and extra day-laborers, was all that the unyielding aversion of the old woman would grant to the wretched girl, without transgressing her oath. There lay Susi, waited on by a maid servant, in the heat of a raging fever, which, even on the first day, broke out with the greatest violence, and brought her so near to death that it seemed only a question of hours when she would die. She lay in this critical state for many days, and only toward

the last did the vitality of youth conquer the force of her terrible illness. It was as if the longing after her child torn from her, was the only thing which restored her, as if the struggling forces had concluded a sort of truce, in order after the lull to renew the battle with increased violence and bitterness. Susi lay weary unto death, unable to lift a limb, when the clouds and phantasies of the fever had left her. It was the heart alone that stirred within her, but with its first beating came the longing after her child; her first thought was remembrance of it, her first feeble utterance a cry for it; the first question she asked after life had returned to her, was, where was her child. The servant did not delay making Sixt acquainted with this oft-repeated, incessant desire. The doctor also wrote to him and advised him to let the sick girl have her will. Her whole existence, mental and physical, he declared, was so wrapped up in this one thought, that the possibility of her restoration to health could be hoped for from this alone. If the suffering girl knew where her child was,

her longing would be given a definite object, and thereby, with her plans for seeing it again, peace and tranquillity would return to her mind, and the healing of her body would be effected. To refuse her the gratification of her ardent desire, would bring on a fresh attack of suffering, as well as of illness, and, in such event, her vitality, so seriously impaired, would not be able to afford the necessary resistance.

Against all this it was impossible for Sixt to persevere in his silence. He overcame his repugnance so far as to make the sick girl a short visit, and he disclosed to her that the little one was well, that all her wants were more than sufficiently cared for, and that it was through the trusted hands of the common friend and teacher of their youth that the child had been delivered to the charge and care of the Sisters of Mercy, at the Orphan Asylum in the city.

Susi made no answer, but from this moment a decided change for the better was evident in the state of her health and in her de-

meanor; she became more quiet; she asked no more questions, but importuned the physician as to when it would be possible for her to leave her bed, and how she could hasten her recovery.

She increased in strength with such surprising quickness, that she was able to sit up half-an-hour several times before any one considered such a thing possible. The little chamber was found vacant one morning, and she had disappeared, with a small bundle of necessary clothing.

The news of Snai's disappearance brought her brother's long-cherished intention, which had been constantly postponed by new events, suddenly into action, and took him at once to the city. He could not otherwise suppose than that his sister had gone directly to the Orphan Asylum. In the capital still more definite traces had been discovered of that other one whom he sought with bleeding heart, and yet, at the same time, felt anxious about finding her again, as one conscious of guilt has a foreboding of just retaliation.

That Franzi had gone to Munich, was placed beyond doubt by all the intelligence obtained directly and indirectly by the schoolmaster. There were no indications of any kind that she had left that city, but where she was, could by no means be discovered. At first she had been seen casually by some one or other of the inhabitants of the place, or by neighbors; but since All Souls' Day, no one knew anything more of Franzi; and then, there was the butcher, Miester Staudinger, who was met on the street. They had trouble in recognizing him again; and he related to them, with an increase of his old rancor, that he had seen the good-for-nothing person in the church-yard, where, in torn clothes, she was asking alms from the people around, and carried everything she had with her in a miserable bundle, her whole effects and her whole shame. And when they tried to make him understand how he wronged the girl, and how it had all come clearly out that she was innocent, and what her connection was with the abandoned child and its mother, he would hardly listen to them, but

interrupted them with disgusting laughter, and the constant exclamation that it was nothing but stuff in which he did not believe, and so had hastened away, as fast as he was able, with his aching legs and crutch-cane.

"It is a long time since All Souls' Day," said Sixt, all at once, half to himself, without connection, as if he were in the midst of a conversation, and not silently jogging along in the forest over which the shades of evening were gathering. It seemed as if he had just answered aloud a question in his mind. "Since that time she may have been long gone, and may now be beyond the mountains!"

The schoolmaster was astonished to hear his silent driver and companion speak out so suddenly, as if in sleep; he did not make any remark about this, however, but satisfied himself by throwing at him a slight side glance, and answering with a good-natured smile.

"That is possible," said he, "but not probable. Franz is as surely in Munich as that old Staudinger lied when he said she was begging and in a torn dress! But we will catch him

now, the old fox! He is probably at this moment lying sick at the Swan Inn at Isarbrück, where he has long been known in the way of his business, and they say he is mortally sick. That will certainly make him a little more humble, and I have reason to think that we will bring him to terms. I have just formed a plan by which his tongue will be loosened."

"What is your plan?"

"When the time comes we will speak of it. We are already at our stopping place; there are the first houses of the meadow yonder. We could go right by the Swan Inn, but it is better that no one should see us first, so that the old man can't hear of our arrival. I think, therefore, we had better put up at the Ladies' Inn. In its time it was the headquarters of the noble ladies from the court, when they held their royal huntings in the Isar fields; and it will do very well for us two, and serve our purpose; and when we are comfortably fixed, I'll go over to the Swan Inn, and put things in train."

The proposition was accepted without objection and carried out.

Sixt soon after stepped over to the house, on the gable of which the white swan, surrounded with green garlands, was displayed invitingly over the lantern, as the sign of the inn. The rows of windows above and the sloping roof were dark; only one window in the corner was light; it was probably the room where the man whom they sought lay.

The school-teacher received Sixt at the door.

"We have come to the right shop," whispered he. "I have already spoken with the landlady; she has no other idea than that we are a couple of his acquaintances come to see the old man from the highlands. She says he is very ill, and most of the time out of his mind. There is a Sister of Mercy with him, for the servants have more than enough to do with their other work."

After a few words together, the two men walked after the hostess up the close-winding staircase, to the long narrow corridor of the upper story, on each side of which were the

doors of the guest chambers. The hostess pointed to the end of the corridor—there in the corner was the room of the man they sought.

The apartment was small, and furnished with only the most necessary things, as it was used only for one night, or for the accommodation of the passing traveler, to whom its uncomfortable appearance would not much matter. A painted bedstead with a not very inviting bed on it, a table in the corner, a bureau under a dim looking-glass, and two chairs with cane seats, formed, besides the colored lithographs on the walls and the faded curtains of the window, the whole furniture. On the shelf of the stove, somewhat shaded by the projecting chimney wall, burned a lamp which cast but a feeble light, but on that account the shadows of the surrounding objects were made more grotesque on the walls and floor. The table and bureau were covered with glasses and vials, whose contents could easily be surmised from their form, and whose number indicated how uncertain the physician was

as to the remedies he should use. The faint smell of musk gave the expert to understand that he had already tried one of the last means of rousing an expiring life to a final effort.

Old Staudinger, changed past recognition, and wasted to a skeleton, lay upon the bed with closed eyes, sunken cheeks, and parted lips. His fleshless hands rested on the coverlet, and his fingers made mysterious, involuntary movements, as if they were trying to seize and pluck something from it. At the side of the bed stood a woman clothed in the black dress and dark hood of the Sisters of Mercy, such as novices wear who intend joining the order, and accustom and prepare themselves for this step, and for taking the perpetual vow, by the severe practice of the duties of the order.

The Sister was leaning lightly over the sick man, and seemed to observe his breathing with sympathetic anxiety; but all at once she straightened herself up and hastened to the door, for without in the corridor approaching footsteps were heard.

"They come," whispered she to herself.

"Those are the people from the highlands of whom the landlord has spoken as wishing to see the master."

The voices became more defined. There was a tone which she could not mistake, and which made her tremble to the depths of her soul.

"My God," faltered she. "Is it not? Yes, it is he! What can he want with the sick man? But, at all events, it is not you, Franz, whom he seeks; and he shall not see your face. No one—no human soul who might betray me at home shall see me."

She hastened out on the half-lighted corridor, and was just in time to avoid those coming, by stepping into a side passage, where the darkness, together with her dress, made it impossible to recognize her.

"These are the two men from the highlands," said the hostess. "They wish to speak with Meister Staudinger about something important, which can bear no delay. Can they go in?"

The Sister did not answer, but merely nod-

ded and pointed to the door of the sick chamber.

"A fine person, the Sister," said the hostess, as she went before them. "She takes such care of this sick man, that it is a pleasure merely to see it. His own daughter could not be more attentive; but she is the most silent person I ever met."

The door was soon reached; they went in; the hostess, without much ceremony, went straight to the bed.

"Here are two men," said she, lightly touching him on the shoulder, "who wish to speak with you; open your eyes, Meister Staudinger; it is very important."

The old man opened his eyes with an unmistakable effort; his look rested fixed and troubled on those who stood before him; he had heard the words, and appeared to understand their meaning, for his eyes brightened for an instant as if he recognized the men, and defined images clearly hovered before him; the images seemed about to form themselves into thoughts, to collect themselves into words,

in vain! His powers, overtaxed and exhausted and hastening to extinction, obeyed the expiring will no longer; the rigid tongue remained motionless, the lips immovable, and with a sigh which raised his laboring breast and seemed to announce speedy death, his glazed eyes closed again.

"It is no use now," said the hostess, half aloud, "to ask him any more questions. Gentlemen, he can't live an hour! Look, his nose has already become quite sharp."

The schoolmaster shrugged his shoulders solemnly. Sixt remained silent, deeply moved. The thought that again a trace, the most important and the last, was lost, that he still stood in the same uncertainty as before, struck him with its full force. It seemed as if he would totter under it—at least the sharp-sighted schoolmaster must have believed so, for he seized him by the arm and led him out of the door. As he came in the corridor, where the bustling hostess could not hear, he said, quietly, with a firm pressure of his hand:

"Don't lose courage, my friend. The garden would not be so beautiful had it not so many enemies ; but with proper care, one overcomes all the cankerworms, churnworms, and spiders. Sunshine follows rain, and in the sunshine the buds burst forth ! Something certainly tells me, Sixt, that we shall find her, and that soon !"

They were just at the side passage, and the Sister was passing by ; no sound had escaped her. She felt a sudden elevation of feeling, as the first glimpse of a rising sun of joy. He is looking for some one ; how if it were herself whom the search concerned ? Had he changed his mind ; had he recognized what a grievous wrong he had done her ? The thought was scarcely expressed, before it was again lost in the idea of the actual facts. Gray clouds obscured and concealed the opening morning. She had at first almost raised her foot for the purpose of going toward them, yet now she stepped further into the darkness, to guard herself from her own weakness ; she pressed the folds of her dark dress more closely to her

breast, to remind herself of her resolution, and of the earnest duty she had undertaken in the sick chamber. She heard with composure the steps of those who went away, gradually dying in the distance. She was now glad at what she had done; besides, what good would her appearance have done? Would he not have been forced to believe that she wished to press herself in his way, to remind him what she had done for him?—she to whom he probably considered it onerous to be under obligations—the debtor of a despised creature, condemned by him and the whole world?

With hurried breathing, but tranquil within, elated by the feeling of the victory she had gained over her own weakness, and armed with the consciousness of complete firmness and strength, she now proceeded to finish her sacrifice.

The sick man lay as before, yet the prediction of the hostess seemed about to be fulfilled. His condition was that of fast-approaching dissolution. His breathing became shorter,

heavier, and louder, and his forehead was covered with cold perspiration. The Sister of Mercy, deeply impressed, and with a short prayer on her lips, stood beside the dying man and wiped the drops from his face with a tender hand.

It seemed as if the motion brought life and action back to his exhausted nerves—as if the glimmering wick still retained one last drop of oil before its extinction. As lightning, or as a sudden gust of wind drives away the mist which has lain over the valley, and gives a view into its depths, so, for a moment, life, feeling, and consciousness, returned to the old man. The soul became clear, and then light came again to his eyes, and strength to his voice.

He saw Franzi bending over him, and recognized her.

“Franzi,” he stammered, painfully. “You are with me? So it was no fancy that I have seen you about me in my fever? You are my nurse?”

“Yes, Sir,” answered she, softly. “Don’t

be irritated and get angry ! I did wrong when I met you last in the church-yard, at my mother's grave. I spoke hard words to you, and since that time I have had no peace and no rest. I wished to go to you at once, to find you out and confess my fault, but I dared not. I feared you could only believe that it was interest or some other motive that led me to you. But when I heard you were so ill and lay here so solitary and forsaken, then I did not restrain myself, and thought that in your condition you would not easily recognize me in this dress ? And so I have at least done my duty as another would have done it, were she still alive. What has happened between her and you, I leave to our Lord God. I will not anticipate His hand and His eternal mercy ! I have myself experienced what humanity is, and what its judgment is. I leave all to heaven, and will not judge in its place. Be composed, Sir ; do not think it is I who have served you. Think me some stranger entirely unknown to you. I am so glad that you have come to yourself again, and have recognized me, and

that I can beg you from the bottom of my heart to pardon me."

"Pardon!" replied the old man, over whose countenance a smiling peace was gradually spreading, such as the hard lines of his face had never before expressed. "I pardon you? It is you whom I must ask to pardon me, for yourself and your mother! I have wronged you both. I have caused you great trouble. I have slandered you—you, my own flesh and blood—my good, noble child, who must have endured so much in your innocence. Pardon me, Franzi," he continued, with fainting voice. "Pardon me for your own and your mother's sake. If you do so, I can die in peace; for then I know that our Lord God will also pardon me when I pass into eternity."

Weakness overpowered him and prevented his finishing. His head sank back heavily after his exertion, his breathing became more labored, and his eyes closed. Then there was something diffused through his whole being, as if the excitement had given new elasticity to body and mind. His breathing

became more peaceful and regular, and seemed that of one asleep.

The scale of life bore up that of death, and sank—sank from the single drop of pure joy which this moment was cast into it.

Franzi knelt at the bed-side in prayer. Her lips uttered not the word of forgiveness, but her heart spoke it so much the more loudly. She bowed and pressed her face against the bed, and over her head seemed to wave the wing of an angel, who blessed her with his outspread hands.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHEERFUL evening had begun at the Orphan Asylum. In a large room, outside of the main building, the Christmas-tree was placed, so that the relatives and patrons of the children could be admitted without violating the stern, cloister regulations of the place. A splendid fir-tree stood in the middle, slightly elevated from the floor. It glittered with innumerable wax candles, and was richly hung over with everything that could delight the eye, hand, and mouth of the eager but so easily pleased children, and was adapted, in the solicitude for their little joys and needs, to keep far from them the thought and painful feeling that they had been deprived of those to whom these cares would be the dearest duties and the supremest happiness, and that it was not a father's eye nor a mother's hand that had decorated and lighted up the Christ-

mas - tree for them. In innocent, careless mirth the little band pressed and made merry around the fir - tree, so magnificent in their eyes. Whoever observed them in their fresh enjoyment, might readily have forgotten the gray jackets in which they were warmly and comfortably clad. But this very uniform, however, was apt to suggest that many tears must have already bedewed the path, though still so short, of every one of these poor children, before the door of compassionate love closed protectingly behind them. There were some Sisters present, rather serious reminders to the over-merry crowd not entirely to forget the order and quiet always enforced in the house. Franzi had also come. The condition of her grandfather had as decidedly improved from hour to hour, as the decline had before been sudden and rapid. She, therefore, had thought she might well venture to leave him for a few hours in charge of others, as her heart urged her to pass the Holy Eve at the Orphan Asylum. This place was so full to her of significant remembrances, and she stood too

at a turning point in her life. In this house the spring of her days began its course in the world ; it was here her pleasure and necessity to follow in thought the channel of her life's stream, through the sunny fields and dark valleys through which it had already wandered, and to become absorbed in dreaming on what course it might yet take, whether united with another stream, to roll along grandly and actively, or alone to struggle painfully through stones and rocks, or to be lost in the broad slough, or running into the sand to disappear.

Thus she thought and gazed at the children as they played about, and was not, at first, in the least surprised when a door opened opposite, and Susi stood before her. As her thoughts had just been hovering around the dear Oaks, was it miraculous if one of its inmates should appear as if alive, before her ? But when Susi, in the highest degree surprised, flew toward her, with a cry of joy, and she felt her arm round her neck, and her kiss on her cheek, she recovered from her reverie, and found

herself awake in the arms of the most beautiful reality. Just at this moment the clock warned the little ones that they must withdraw and separate from their pleasures ; looking back longingly, half willingly, half reluctantly, the little flock obeyed the call. They thus learned, perhaps for the first time, what life so often demands of its pupils : to deny one's self, and turn from pleasure when it smiles most alluringly.

The friends were almost alone, and there was no one to disturb them, or listen to the joyful effusions of their re-union.

Susi could not compose herself for a while, from astonishment and delight.

"Yes, yes, it is certainly you," she exclaimed, and touched Franzi's cheeks and forehead, as if to assure herself of her bodily presence. "This is your beautiful, good face—these are your good, true eyes. But how do you come here—at this time, and in this dress?"

Franzi turned her eyes away, and was at pains to suppress in her voice everything that could sound like reproach.

"Ask not," said she, softly. "You certainly know what has driven me away from home."

"Who knows that better than myself!" cried Susi, passionately. "You were forced to go away on my account. It was I who drove you away. To make me happy, you brought yourself into misery; but now all the trouble and grief is over! What are you doing in this woful black dress?"

"I do not understand you," answered Franz; "but the dress is suitable for me, I have assumed it. I have here in this house my second home. The worthy mother, who knows me, and has loved me from the time I was here first, has accepted me as a sister on probation for a while. My first home, with my dear parents—that I lost. I was driven out of the third, at your house at the Oaks. The orphan house was my second home, and it is now my determination to remain here.

"But why?" asked Susi, wonderingly. "The whole world stands open to you again! Have you then heard nothing? Do you know

nothing of what has happened since you disappeared? Can you really not guess why I am here, and what I have to seek in the Orphan Asylum?"

Franzi looked at her with wonderment.

"I do not understand you," said she; "go on."

"I am here," continued Susi, "because I have at last done, at the greatest need, what I should long ago, in the very beginning, have done—confessed all."

"Susi!" cried Franzi, astounded, and pressed both hands to her forehead and eyes, to assure herself that she had heard aright. "You have?—but it is surely not possible! It cannot be. Then I can again be pure from all evil report and shame! Then people will again know that I am innocent!"

"Certainly, everybody is satisfied of that already."

"Everybody! Then I am no longer bound by my word that I gave you. My tongue is free again. Everybody knows that I am innocent—he too."

"He? Whom do you mean?" asked Susi, with astonishment.

"Sixt," answered Franzi, quickly, but recovered herself at once, and added hesitatingly and with downcast looks—"the farmer of the Oaks. I mean your brother."

"Certainly, he knows it too. It was to him I made known my whole guilt, but with the purpose only of getting my child again."

With hurried breathing, she related what had happened. Franzi eagerly listened, and ever deeper and ruddier glowed the color of her cheeks.

"Thus has all happened," said Susi, in conclusion. "Now rejoice, Franzi, as much as you can. You have every reason to do so, and you can, for you have a pure heart and a good conscience! I will do what is my duty. I will remain in the house here, by my poor child, as long as it lives. It is very sick. They try to console and to reassure me, but I know better than the doctor and all the good Sisters together. My child must die, for I am not worthy to be a mother. I have not deserved that

such happiness should fall to my lot. When the angels have come down and taken it to themselves, the poor little creature, then I will change places with you, Franzi, and take the vail and the black dress in your stead."

In spite of Franzi's gesture of dissent, she quietly but decidedly continued :

"This matter is settled. But you—you must go back into the world, to our home ! You must show yourself before the men who have called you wicked, so that they will feel ashamed and take their hats off before you—before the most honest maiden and the most steadfast friend ! You must go to Oak Farm, as well as he."

"Never, never !" cried Franzi, and pushed away her friend's hand as if she had already taken hold of her with the purpose of leading her to the farm, on which so much seemed to depend.

Astonished, Suzi again took her hand and drew her soothingly toward her.

"What is the matter with you ?" said she, anxiously and tenderly. "You seem fright-

ened, and all at once your eyes fill with tears—you, the stout-hearted Franzi. I never saw you so before in all my life!”

Both were violently moved. In their embracing they were not aware that the door opened, and that Sixt entered with the schoolmaster.

“Why wont you go back to Oak Farm?” began Susi again. “You will have to do so. My brother has been looking for you everywhere for weeks past. He will not rest till you go with him!”

“Will have to?” answered Franzi, somewhat recovered from her confusion. “I think that Franzi has shown that she will not be obliged if she does not wish to. Your brother also knows that I cannot go with him. I have told him so himself, long ago, before the trouble came, when he stated to me that he needed a skillful housekeeper on his large farm, and an honest maid servant, and proposed to hire me.”

“But why? tell me at least the reason?”

“He asked me that too. I can’t tell you any more than I told him.”

"This is perfectly incomprehensible! He wishes so much to make amends to you for the wrong he has done you. Can't you forgive him? Is he then indeed so hateful to you?"

"Hateful to me?" cried Franzi, in spite of herself. "Oh! I wish you were right. My heart would feel lighter then."

"How?" answered Susi, embracing her friend, who buried her glowing face in her bosom. "He is not hateful to you, and yet—"

"Torment me not, Susi," said Franzi, taking courage. "Let it be enough for you when I tell you that it cannot be! What I will do, I cannot say. I have found my grandfather; but this I certainly know—I can earn my bread anywhere! What business would I have on Oak Farm? Must I look on at what must certainly happen there yet? No, no; I go whither the Lord God may lead me; but there is no path that leads me to the Oaks."

"But if I should know a path for you," said Sixt, who, unobserved, had approached, and now seized Franzi's hand.

She sprang up and cried out with affright

and joy; she tottered, and had not strength either to withdraw her hand or to speak.

"There is yet a path for you to the Oaks," continued he, in an urgent voice, from his very heart; "not for the orphan girl, for she no longer exists—not for the companion of my youth and my playfellow, for she has turned away from me—not for the housekeeper and maid-servant, as I cannot be your master, since for being master there I have to thank no one else than yourself—but for the mistress, there is a beautiful, broad and open way. Give me your hand, Franzi—give it to me for ever, and go with me to the Oaks as—my wife!

"Sixt!" cried Franzi, with rapture sparkling in her eyes; but in a moment she recovered herself, and said, turning away:

"You forget! A waiter-girl cannot become mistress of Oak Farm!"

"Yes, you are right," cried he, passionately. "Let me only taste all the bitterness I have poured out to you to overflowing. I will drain the cup to the dregs. But tell me you forgive me—make my heart free and my

conscience light. Say yes, and come with me to Oak Farm ! ”

She still appeared to be irresolute, but did not resist when he gently put his arm around her, and drew her to him. Fervently, and with inexpressible happiness, she gazed into his eyes.

“ Is it possible ? ” she said, tenderly. “ Is it really you, Sixt, who speak to me thus ? Am I really no longer a wicked, disgraced person in your eyes ? Do you reproach and revile me no longer ? ”

“ How could I ? ” cried the happy Sixt. “ I could put my hand under your feet, so that not a stone might touch them. What have you not done ; you have sacrificed yourself for the honor and good name of us and our parents ; you have taken misery upon yourself, and suffered shame and disgrace ; you have let yourself be unjustly condemned, and have been silent, when it would have cost you but a word to have cast the whole guilt and shame upon us ; you have borne no grudge for what I have done to you in my arrogant

blindness ; and, more than all this, you have saved me, and preserved for me what is dearer than life, than the Oak Farm, and all. Make me not eternally your debtor, Franzi ; let me begin to thank you ; and accept it, if in return I give you everything, myself, and all that I have and am."

"I can scarcely believe but that I am asleep," said Franzi. "I fear I shall awake and all this happiness be only a dream! Is it true, Sixt, can you really love me?"

"With my whole heart," answered Sixt. "I have always loved you, only I did not know it myself! When I became mistaken as to you, when I thought I must give you up as lost, I then first discovered it, because I could not tear my thoughts away from you! And on that fearful night—you well know the one I mean—it all at once shone clearly upon me like a burning torch, and I would have been an unhappy, ruined man if I had not found you again—if you had not forgiven me! And have you quite forgiven me? And can you forget it, and love me too?"

And will you follow me to our home, as my wife?"

"Yes, I will," said Franzi, passionately and firmly. "I will persuade my grandfather to go with me into the country. It will do him good. I will quarter myself on your old aunt at the Manor Farm, and will wait there until the spring comes; and if your love has not then melted away with the snow—if you should really come and take me away as your bride—"

The first embrace, the bliss of the first kiss, filled the hearts of the happy pair. The honest schoolmaster, who had been observing them aside with quiet joy, approached, and greeting Franzi in the most cordial manner, congratulated and shook his friend by the hand. He could not speak—his voice was choked with emotion. Susi had disappeared with the Sisters; she could not witness a happiness which lay so remote from her path in life, and would not disturb what was so beautiful and so rare in such a place. It was a long time before they had mutually related and discussed every-

thing; but it afforded them a peculiar and inexpressible delight again to live through and bear in common the sufferings of the past, which now had become sweet to them. Each broken flower was mourned over, each lost moment lamented, and then the triumphal march was begun into the open and boundless realm of the future, wherein each abiding-place already seemed to them a house of fortune, a temple of joy, or a bower of love.

When they separated, and Sixt had gone with the schoolmaster to the inn, he could not sleep. With a full heart he strode to and fro a long time, restless and unsettled, and yet he had never been so happily awake. He walked to the window, opened it, and let the fresh, cooling breath of the winter night blow in on his glowing face for a few moments. When the midnight bell rang out powerfully and solemnly from all the towers to announce the birth of our Saviour, his heart was oppressed with a feeling of devout thankfulness; and over the snow-covered gables, from out the blue depths of the heavens, there greeted him

as before at the forest chapel, the star of love, but this time glistening with tears of joy.

And the spring came!—more beautiful and earlier than in many a former year. The sun soon melted the snow on the mountains, so that the full rivulets, foaming with joy, rushed down from their mountain watch, like messengers who, having seen the approach of a beloved prince, now hasten to carry the joyful intelligence down to the valleys and the open plains. The bushes and trees on the road first heard the gladdening message, and put forth on all sides their red and white banners of flowers, and began to crown themselves with their green wreaths. The singers in the bushes were not idle in their warblings and pipings, as is the fitting custom at a high festival; and the swallows came back to the Oak Farm and prepared to build their nests where they had built each year. They announced to the lord of the farm, if he had needed any

other monitor than the call in his own heart that it was now time to go for his bride.

The Oak Farm was beautifully and magnificently situated, almost like a small castle, in the middle of a broad, well-worn parterre, through which two carriage-ways ran, as smooth and firm as if they were the work of a skillful park gardener. Linden-trees were planted around a wide parallelogram, like a natural border. There were perhaps twelve of them which vied with each other in the immensity of their trunks, the strength of their boughs, and the wealth of their foliage. There could be no comparison between them, for all were equally beautiful. Behind them, toward the side, arose a gentle inclination richly covered with hazel and sloe-trees, with barberry and spindle-trees hung with the vines and creepers of the corn-vine and vetch, and crowned by three mighty oaks, which exacted respect for their age as well as wonder for their beauty. It was these which, towering up for more than a hundred years, had given a name to the farm at the foot of the hill. Here there

was a small open chapel, plainly built of stone from the field, with a wooden porch in front, beneath which was a beech that served for prayer as well as repose. From this spot there was a view on all sides of the country, so fine that you could not but appreciate and respect the discerning mind which years before had built and planted the little chapel and trees as land marks, so that for all time no one might pass this way without stopping to enjoy the magnificence spread out before him, or depart without elevating thoughts. In three directions an immense circle inclosed the extensive mountain world, with its ridges and cliffs, its steeps and precipices, its heights and peaks, and with its snow-fields, glaciers, forest and rock—a primeval sea petrified during a storm. A charming girdle of rolling land undulated beneath it, chequered with corn-fields and strips of wood, and studded with white, glistening spires, villages, and gabled mansions, as with jewels. On the fourth side the eye ran along open and level fields, over settlements and districts, between glittering threads of

rivers, richly cultivated fields, and lakes like mirrors, till it reached the distant western horizon, fading away in the golden sunshine.

It was an evening toward the end of May. In front of the leafy arbor-walk at the Oak Farm, young beech branches were arranged, and before the door two of a larger size were placed; freshly-mown aromatic grasses were strewn along the steps, the ascent and the walk, that the new mistress of the Oak Farm might make her entrance over them; for Sixt had gone forth to-day to bring his betrothed from the Manor Farm, to lead her to church, and then to the Oak Farm, so dear to her, and which she had left in such misery—but to which she was about to return under circumstances of joy immeasurably greater. The men and maid servants in their best attire, their whitest linen sleeves and aprons, stood and loitered about expectant; but the shepherd boy and the carpenter were busy up under the oaks, in loading and adjusting two small guns, that nothing might be wanting in

those observances customary at the coming of the bride.

It has been a long time since so splendid a wedding has been celebrated in the mountains as that of Aicher of the Oaks with Franzi of the inn ; both were known and beloved, and there had been much talk about them ; no one would have thought that these two would have made a match, and yet it was so, and no peasant or farmer in the neighborhood who could possibly be there, was absent from the wedding, in order to hear precisely how all this had come to pass. It was a noble procession of the finest teams in the country which left the church for the Inn at the Cross-Roads ; for there the wedding entertainment was to be served. The host had not ceased to importune the bridal pair, had prayed them humbly and dolefully only to forgive him for what he had done out of pure ignorance, and Franzi had not been averse to his prayer. There was no place in her disposition where anger could conceal itself ; moreover, she thought it would be very appropriate and significant to celebrate

the day of her greatest joy and entire restoration of character at the spot where she had suffered the greatest humiliation and the most disgraceful shame.

There was no end to the line of carriages ; a little incident caused them to stop a moment, for on the other side of the Cross-Road a very elegant traveling carriage, heavily laden with baggage, came rushing up with post horses, and it was some time before—avoiding the gayly adorned carriages full of cheerful peasants clad in their best—it could pass by. The carriage in which the bride sat with two garlanded young girls and the presiding lady of honor, came to a full stop. This presiding matron was no other than the old half-blind aunt of the Manor Farm. Although very weak, she could not be prevented from going once more into the world and showing herself to the people on the day when the last stain was removed from the Manor Farm, and all who were connected with it. By the side of the carriage rode the bridegroom, surrounded by a crowd of his particular friends, also on horse-

back, who accompanied their departing associate as a guard of honor.

The carriage and the rider were obliged to pass close to each other; in the traveling carriage reclined the Bailiff and his wife. The Government not entirely agreeing with his course and proceedings in reference to the Habersfeld and the boundary dispute, and in various other matters, and discovering that he was not exactly in his proper sphere of action among such people and with such surroundings, had recalled him with distinguished marks of approbation, in order, as was said, to avail the better of his talents at an embassy.

"Ah, see, Herr Aicher of the Oaks!" said he, with his sweetest smile, making a movement as if about to raise his riding cap; "I have great satisfaction in thus meeting you; so it has come to pass as I prophesied!"

"Yes, Herr Baron von Lanzfelt," replied Sixt, taking off his hat and folding his arms upon his breast, "our dear God has adjusted matters better than we deserve! It were best for one to examine his own heart, and confess

that each one knows his own trouble, and has his own burden to bear."

The road had become clear. The Bailiff pretended not to hear this remark; and while the horses started off again at a sharp trot, pointed to the procession and the bridal company. "Only see there," said he to his wife, "what originality, how much of national peculiarity in this procession!—in their appearance and costumes! Really, they would be worthy of the brush of a Teniers or an Ostade! What say you, *ma mie*?

The carriage rolled rapidly away; the guests gathered in the inn, adorned for the festivity; and amid the pleasures of the feast and the wedding dance, the meeting was entirely forgotten. There was the greatest merriment at the table, and many a one jogged his neighbor with his elbow and whispered that such a merry wedding had not been celebrated in the memory of man. Finkenzeller had Grubhofer, the old rebel, opposite to him; and these two had scarcely time to eat and drink, they had so much to hear and to tell, and to

laugh at. But the merriest of all were certainly old Staudinger and the staunch schoolmaster of Osterbrunn. The unhopèd for alteration in Staudinger's circumstances, and the unexpected change in his temper and disposition, had actually transformed him in appearance. Contrary to expectation, renewed health and strength were restored to him; it seemed as if a new youth had fallen to his lot—a late autumn, which promised to be more beautiful than the spring and summer of his life had been. He was rejoiced to feel and see how universally he had regained his position in public opinion, and was never weary of relating how he had found Franzi and of blaming himself, only in order, however, to repeat how glad he was to be no longer alone in the world, and to have such a daughter, and such a son-in-law.

Sixt sat with quiet joy beside Franzi, who could hardly master her emotion, and looked around her with glistening eyes. Her former self-reliant disposition had been softened, and her heart was like a cup filled to the brim with

the noblest wine, which the slightest touch or a single drop more would cause to overflow. At one of the numerous toasts while bowing to each other and gently clinking glasses, he whispered to her :

“ We will think of those also who cannot be with us, and who yet, without intending it, and indeed contrary to their wishes, have contributed to our happiness.”

He was thinking of Susi, who, in the interval after the death of her child, had taken the veil, and of the forester's sad and lonely grave.

The schoolmaster raised his goblet, and trembling with joy, said in a loud voice : “ The gardener's highest joy is to see that flourish which he has planted and nourished, and to see threatening danger warded off from his dear protégés ! You see these two good trees, beautiful without, and sound within to the very core ! That they may so remain, and may increase and prosper ; that they may bear blossoms and fruit, of which they give promise ; that the Eternal One may send upon them, for their happiness and prosperity, sunshine and

rain at proper times and in due measure ; that he may strengthen their roots and temper their bark in the storm, so that they may stand there resplendent, as an ornament to the earthly garden and an honor to the heavenly one ; for all this, dear friends and neighbors, clink glasses with me and shout : The two trees, may they live for ever ! ”

Rejoicing, the whole wedding party chimed in ; the glasses jingled against each other as if they too were anxious to join in the merriment ; and the musicians scraped and blew as if the instruments would break to pieces. It was already late when the pair, now united for life, accompanied by some intimate friends, went through the mild May night to their new home. When they reached the Oak Farm, the servants stood in array in two lines with scythe-blades in their hands, which, on being struck, sounded like a festive peal of bells ; and from under the oaks below, the small cannons roared out report after report ; and the mountain, aroused from its slumbers, rolled back majestically the echoes.

Before the house stood a beautiful carriage with a rack for baggage, as clean about the wood-work as when it came from the builder's hands, and with such bright ornaments that they gleamed like silver in the partial light of the night. It was laden with all kinds of useful and ornamental household goods, with a fine, gayly-painted clothes-chest, a beautiful and complete bed, and two trunks full of the finest and whitest linen. There was not wanting also the spinning-wheel with a red distaff decorated with ribbons, and a neatly ornamented cradle; behind, a cow was tied, her horns gilded at the tips, and with a large wreath about her neck—a more beautiful animal, the servant girls all with one voice said, could not be found even if you searched the whole district.

It was a wedding carriage, such as the bride was accustomed to bring with her as a dowry to her husband. Some unknown men had brought it just at twilight, and quickly unharnessing the horses, had ridden off before one could stop them and inquire about it.

A large placard, fixed to the wagon in front, betrayed the sender. It ran thus :

Oft times ere now the truest shot
Hath gone from the mark aside ;
And yet to me the Haberfeld
Is still my greatest pride.

Quick flew the days at the Oak Farm after this, for there was work and constant employment at the house, and love and contentment scattered their seeds upon the spot softened by these, and it was only natural that bliss and perfect domestic happiness should spring up thence. Each day, although like all the others, was a new holiday ; and when the neighbors from the surrounding farms and villages offered their congratulations according to custom, and had become intimate, there was but one opinion, that no place was so cosy and pleasant as under the oaks in front of the old chapel, or in the Linden grove, when the beautiful farmer's wife had set out the bowls of bread and milk for luncheon, and when Sixt, as overseer of the community, conferred and advised with the others concerning village matters, or read from the newspapers which he received of all

the events which were exciting the outer world to storm and conflagration, or of the new discoveries which were being made here or there, or of that new spirit of freedom beginning to prevail everywhere, which, without wronging any, would accord to every one, high or lowly, distinguished or obscure, that which belonged to him from God and of right.

So summer approached and quickly reached the highest point, from which the sun inclined toward the autumnal circle. On the eve of St. John's Day the summer solstice bonfire flamed brightly before the Oak Farm-house, and the young people were making merry at it according to the old custom, jumping through the flames with shouts and laughter.

Sixt was standing near by with Franzi, looking on, when he felt himself caught by the arm from behind. Surprised, he looked around, and observed in the shadow of the linden-trees several men, who carefully concealed their faces from the light.

They were the ancients from among the Haberers.

"The oats begin to grow yellow," said one, in a whisper, "it is time to think about the court. How about that, Habermeister?"

With anxious emotion Franzi held fast her husband's hand; he gently disengaged it, and without a word of reply walked to the house. When he returned, he held in his hand the master's staff of the Kaiser Karl, with the up-raised oath fingers.

"Take it," said he to the ancients, "I have learned to believe that the time for this power has passed; in our country, law and right govern; no one need any longer obtain his rights as it was formerly necessary for him to do. Do what you wish, my men, but I will try my own heart, and over no one again will I break the staff and scatter the oat-ears. I will leave judgment to our God. There, take back your staff."

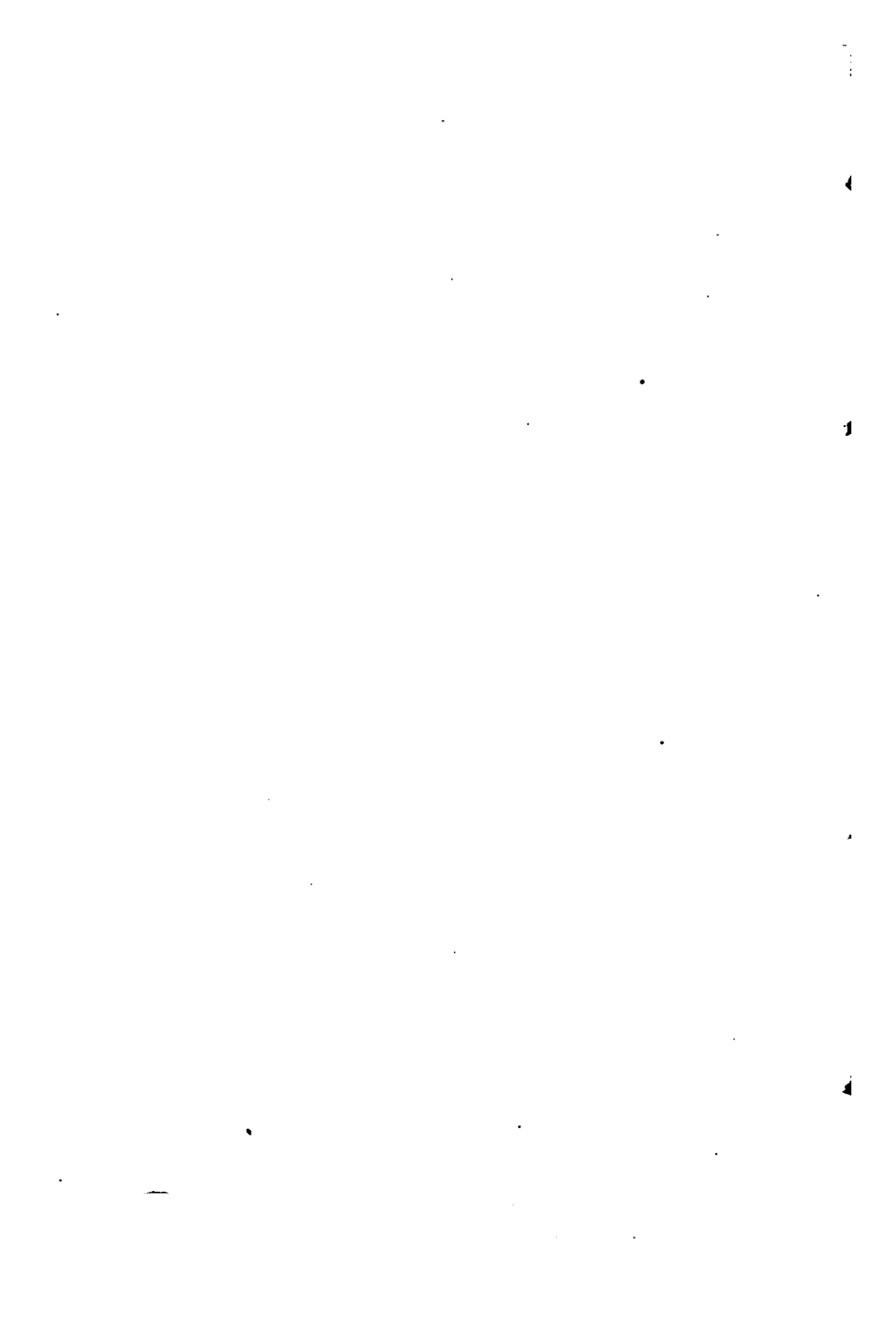
"What!" exclaimed one of the ancients; "would you give up our old right? abolish the old custom, which has accomplished so much good? We cannot find another Meister like you; hold, Aicher—retain the staff."

"No," responded Sixt, "the custom has accomplished much good, but the time for it has passed. It were better that ten guilty persons should escape, than that a single innocent one should suffer harm. I will not!"

He offered back the staff in a decided manner; but the ancients strove not to take it. Meanwhile, advancing, they had approached the fire, when during the contest the staff slipped from their hands, and rolling down the descent, fell into the midst of the flames. One of them, indeed, sprang forward immediately and sought to rescue it, but it was too late; the wood, dried by age, had at once ignited, and in a few moments the staff lay, burned to ashes, among the coals.

"That should be a sign to us," said Sixt, "that the old times are gone, with their old customs; and that the power of the Kaiser has passed away, and with it all the causes from which it arose."

THE END.



JUST PUBLISHED.

THE VILLA ON THE RHINE,

AUTHOR'S EDITION,

By BERTHOLD AUERBACH,

WITH

A Portrait; and a Biographical Sketch of the Author,

By BAYARD TAYLOR.

The whole work will be issued in TWO STYLES.

I. CHEAP EDITION—Four parts. These can be bound in two volumes, uniform with the American Edition of "On the Heights," or with, the Tauchnitz Edition.

II. STANDARD LIBRARY EDITION—Two volumes, cloth, fine tinted paper, uniform with the American Edition of "On the Heights."

These Editions, translated from the Author's advance sheets, will be issued complete before the story is finished in the *Vienna Presse*, and consequently long before the completion of the Boston edition, which is translated from *Die Presse*, in defiance of the Author's rights.

LEYPOLDT & HOLT,

PUBLISHERS,

NEW YORK.

JUST PUBLISHED.

THE GAIN OF A LOSS.

By the Author of "The Last of the Cavaliers."

12mo, Cloth, \$1.50.

"If you want a good, new 'society novel,' rather carefully written, and full of passion and incident, but cleanly and decent from cover to cover, try **THE GAIN OF A LOSS.**"—*Hartford Post.*

"Written with spirit and skill, adequate to interest, without fatiguing the reader, and containing many traits of more than ordinary attraction."—*Boston Transcript.*

"A capital story. Written, we should say, by a lady, and told most charmingly. Its atmosphere is healthy—its creatures men and women like ourselves—its scenes natural—its ending just what might have been expected. It is really pleasant in the multitude of tame novels that have been of late inflicted upon the reading community, to pick up a book that so sparkles with vigorous life and natural sentiment."—*Troy Times.*

"A novel of decided merit. . . . Will be read for the mere interest of the story, while the excellent plot is sustained by an undercurrent of thought and reflection that gives it a higher value."—*New York Leader.*

"Told in a manner which would not be discreditable to Anthony Trollope himself, and in fact, is very much in his vein."—*Hartford Courant.*

THE FISHER MAIDEN.

By BJÖRNSTJERN BJÖRNSON.

16mo, Cloth, \$1.25.

"An artist, not a photographer."—*Athenæum.*

* * * "There was room for a true genius, one with poetic insight and thorough faith in the simple element at his command, and surely such a man has recently arisen in Björnson. . . . The exquisite emotions, apprehension of beautiful truths combined with musical sympathies, constitutes sometimes a faculty in itself, and yields to mankind a lyrist like Tennyson, and an idyllic thinker like Björnson."—*London Spectator.*

"One of Björnson's best stories. The character of the heroine is poetically delineated, and through her life he teaches the great thought that the genius of an individual should determine his destiny. The arguments in defence of his theory are spirited and are just."—*New York Leader.*

"The workmanship is singularly fine, like some of that in Flemish interiors and Moorish jewelry. There are few characters, but each is a study, and the tale is both a story and an argument."—*N. Am. and U. S. Gazette.*

"A story drawn from nature with the pen of a master."—*Boston Traveller.*

"A gem—an incident in the literary history of the world."—*Troy Times.*

LEYPOLDT & HOLT, PUBLISHERS,

451 Broome St., New York.

BY COPYRIGHT ARRANGEMENT WITH THE AUTHOR.

IN PRESS.

F. SPIELHAGEN'S
COMPLETE WORKS.

Translated from the German.

I.

PROBLEMATIC CHARACTERS.

(NOW READY.)

II.

THROUGH NIGHT TO LIGHT.

(A SEQUEL TO PROBLEMATIC CHARACTERS.)

Translated by Prof. SCHELE DE VERE.

III.

THE HOHENSTEIN FAMILY.

Translated by Prof. SCHELE DE VERE.

IV.

HAMMER AND ANVIL.

V.

IN RANK AND FILE.

VI.

ROSE, AND THE VILLAGE COQUETTE.

LEYPOLDT & HOLT, PUBLISHERS,

451 Broome St., New York.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

MRS. JENKIN'S NOVELS.

Just ready.

Madame de Beaupré.

By Mrs. C. JENKIN, author of "A Psyche of To day," "Who Breaks Pays," etc. 16mo. \$1.25.

In preparation.

"Once and Again."

"Cousin Stella."

Recently Published.

A Psyche of To-day.

By Mrs. C. JENKIN, author of "Who Breaks Pays." \$1.25.

"After opening the pretty volume of this story, we did what a newspaper reviewer rarely finds time to do with a book to be 'noticed'—read it through without stopping, from title-page to *finis*. * * * It is a book to be welcomed in any home."—*N. Y. Times*.

"A capital novel of modern French life and society. * * * The writer's method of composition, so bright, crisp, and suggestive, adds greatly to the effect of her wit, observation, and sentiment."—*Boston Transcript*.

"Displays great delicacy of feeling and perception of character, and is written in an admirable style."—*Springfield Republican*.

"A charming Novel."—*Philadelphia Press*.

TWO NOVELS WORTH READING.—*Nation*.

"Who Breaks—Pays." By the author of "Cousin Stella," "Skirmishing," &c. 1 vol., 12mo. Cloth. Price, \$1.25.

"Who Breaks—Pays," is a love tale, told with exquisite pathos and poetry. There is a freshness and originality about the book which give it a place among the standard works of the day."—*Publishers' Circular*.

"One of the most interesting stories we have ever read. It is a love tale, but most unlike the trashy stuff published as such, and worthy the reading of intellectual people."—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*.

Skirmishing. By the Author of "Who Breaks—Pays," etc. 12mo. Cloth. Price, \$1.25.

"Every page tells; there is no book-making about it—no attempt to fill chapters with appropriate affections. Each sentence is written carefully, and the result is that we have a real work of art, such as the weary critic has seldom the pleasure of meeting with."—*The London Reader*.

